Nordic Vision

ENTERTAINMENT
FOR MANIACS

Jubileum Issue no. 13

Sex & Satan

New Soundcheck
Massive review section

Emperor & Immortal
Plus lots more

THE BEAUTY AND THE BEASTS

Even Song
Path of the angels

Evensong - Path of the angels

Debut CD of real melancholic and depressive metal made by this Hungarian band. It can be compared by a mix of My Dying Bride and Theatre of Tragedy. Deep emotions supported by melancholic violins, simply brilliant

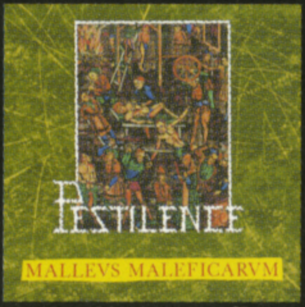
Houwitser - Death but not buried

Mike, Aad & Michel of Sinister & Theo of Judgement Day made the most heavy and brutal death grind album ever. Supported by the sickest lyrics you can imagine.

WHIPLASH
MESSAGES IN BLOOD

Whiplash - Messages in Blood (the early years)

Finally on CD; the early years of Whiplash (1985 -1986), which contains both their demos and two live gigs with lots of unreleased material. A must for all Whiplash and thrash fans.


PESTILENCE
MALLEVS MALEFICARVM

Pestilence - Mallevs Maleficarvm + demos

CONSOLATION
STAHLPLAAT

Consolation - Stahlplaat

WHIPLASH
INSULT INJURY

Whiplash - Insult to injury + Live at CBGBs 1986

Manegarm - Nordstjarnans tidsalder

Incomplete

Nembrionic - Incomplete

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PROVOKE

Altar - Provoke

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DISPLEASED RECORDS

Welcome to our small jubileum issue. Five years have passed since the first issue was released, and most things have changed very much since we first started out. I don't really want to say that much, but I hope that you will appreciate what we have done with this issue, and we feel that this is the first step we have taken with the purpose of both being an informative magazine as well as being entertaining. We hope you feel the same way.

Next issue will see the return of our usual features again, like the demo and fanzine reviews, as well as Christfighter Union where we have had a talk with Australian Mortification.

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MYSTICUM

EMPEROR

IMMORTAL

Nordic Vision

Coverphoto:
Diva Demona.
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Alf Börjesson

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Around the World
News

It's going to be a witchy year! Witchery are going to invade your attention this year!

Darkthrone promise hostility!

After a long silence, it is now clear that Darkthrone is busy writing material for their new album entitled "Ravishing Grimness". All the songwriting is handeled by Nocturno Culto while Fenriz is writing the lyrics. Recording is planned for this diabolical Summer.

Carpathian Forest will hopefully have their new album out during the Autumn. The title of the album will be "Old Strange Brew" and will include Tchort, member of Emperor a few years back, on bass. They have also recorded "Carnage" that will be found on the upcoming Mayhem tribute release through Avantgarde Music.

The new Mayhem album will hopefully be recorded this Summer.

Infernal, the new band of former Dark Funeral frontman Blackmoon, are busy recording their new album under the title "Hellstorms". Nordic Vision have been fortunate and heard a couple of the new songs and this is just what we have been waiting for. Great fast and aggressive Black Metal. This seems to be a great highlight in the pathetic lifecoloured Black Metal scene.

Sadistic Intent will record their new album "The Second Coming of Darkness…" sometime this year. In the meanwhile you might be able to check them out on a tribute CD to Possessed. Sadistic Intent have done their version of "The Exorcist", and the most interesting aspect with this is that they actually have Jeff Beccera doing the vocals!

Satyricon will have their new album "Rebel Extravaganza" out during September. The band is busy recording their new album at the moment.

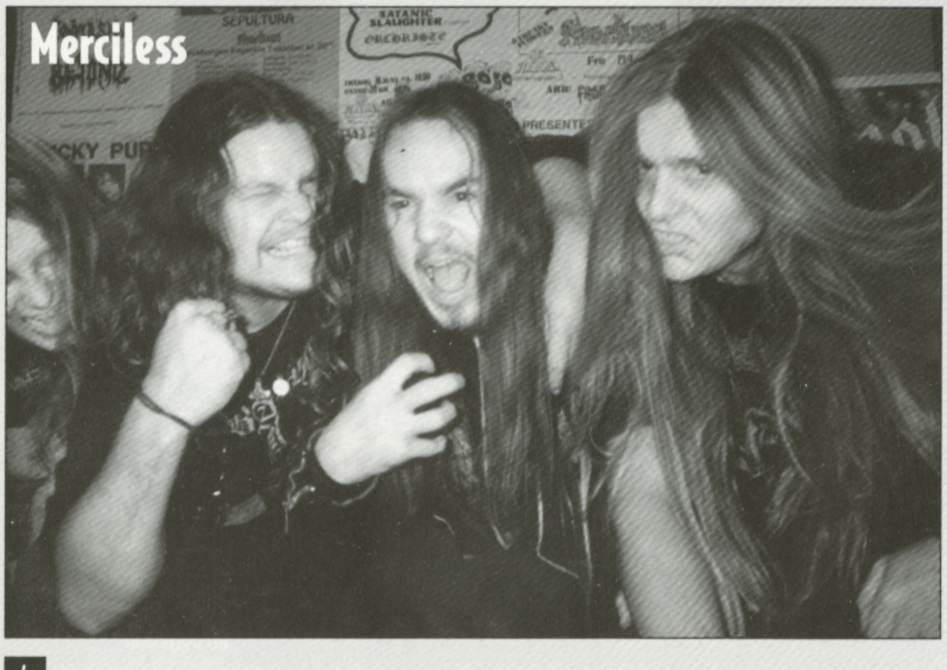
Immortal hope to have their next album recorded by the end of the year.

Witchery have just released the "Witchburner" mini-CD and are currently busy in the studio finishing the last touch on their second album "Dead, Hot and Ready".

Mortiis have signed with Earache Records.

The second Tartaros album "Weaving the Green Light" will be released this Fall.

Old Swedish Thrash band Merciless are back on their feet. Their debut album originally released through Euronymous' label Deathlike Silence Productions will be re-released via Osmose Productions, and most likely the new album from Merciless will also be out through the same label.



Thorns hope to have their album recorded during the Summer. Look forward to that one during the end of 1999.

Norwegian Demonic will head over to the US to record their second album at Sound Temple Studios with James Murphy as the producer. The album will be titled "Bizarre Killing Rituals".

Dimmu Borgir and Emperor might tour the US together this Summer.

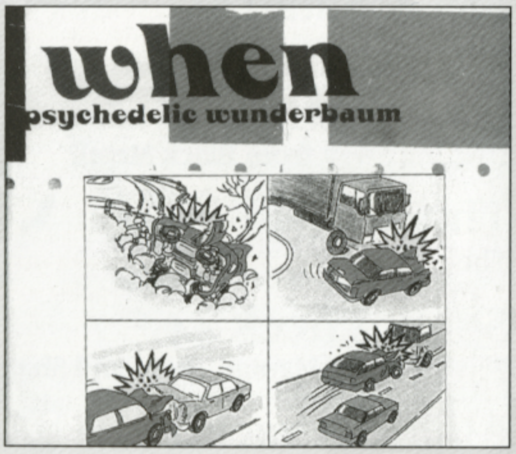
Usurper might tour Europe soon, as support to Cradle of Filth.

Necropolis should have released their "Thrashing Holocaust" Thrash compilation CD by now. Featuring bands like Usurper, Sabbat, Sadistic Intent, Absu, Witchery and plenty of others. A total of 19 bands, so be prepared for a massive dose of thrashing holocaust Metal.

Are you waiting for the third Immolation CD, "Failure for Gods"? It is finished and should be out real soon!

The new Six Feet Under album, "Maximum Violence", will be released in June.

The fantastic When have just released their new album, "Psychedelic Wonderbaum", through Jester Records. Taking their avantgardistic and unorthodox music yet another step, the album is simply beyond great. This is music for the future!



New great When album out, via Jester Records!

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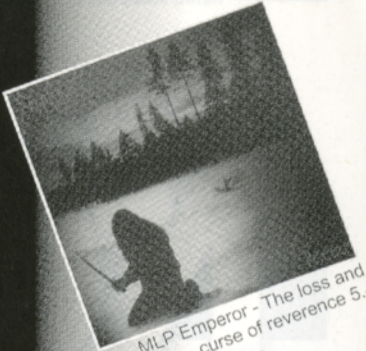
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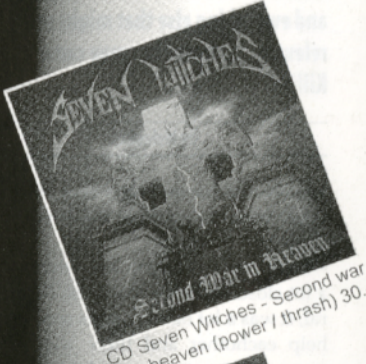

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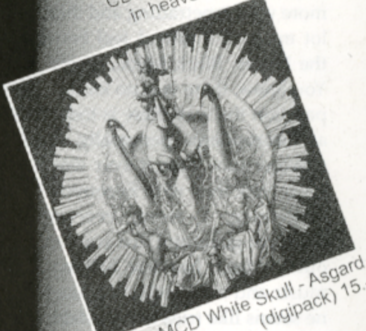
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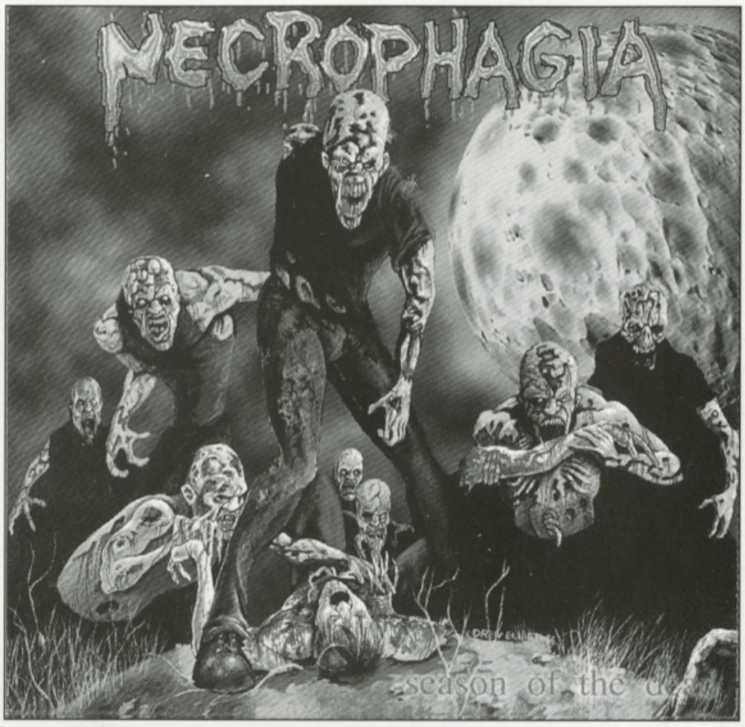
Horror Sickness

Necrophagia

Necrophagia have really risen from the grave. Back with a new album and a lot more in the pipeline. There has been a lot of writing regarding Eibon, a project involving Killjoy and Norwegian musicians. Touching into that but mainly hooking up with Killjoy to talk about the resurrection of Necrophagia and everything else that might seem relevant. Up from the grave came Killjoy.

By Melankol

Jenna Jameson



You started Necrophagia back in 1983, what was the spirit in the band then compared to today?
-"Back then I just think everything was a lot closer as far as the scene in general, it was a lot better, bands seemed to help eachother and there was a lot more with tapetrading and there was a lot more of a united feel between all the bands, Black Metal, Death Metal. You know, there was no kind of big separation the way there is today. As far as Necrophagia personally, it's a lot stronger now than it ever was. It was great back then with Euronymous and everything, I mean, everyone had common goals and just wanted to put out the best, heaviest fucking sickest music and now, today it's like everyone seems like tries to backstabb the other bands. If they see another band getting more popular then they try to rag on this band and I'm not really into all that."

But today there is also a lot of crap bands!
-"Oh yeah, sure!"

Was it the same back when you started the band?
-"To an extent but not as bad, I mean, there is always gonna be a lot of crappy bands but it seems like today there is a lot more. That's one of the problems I was talking about as far as…there's not enough fans or so many bands that everyone is in a band and they don't want to be a fan of another band."

I suppose there has been some line-up changes since you started the band right? What happened to the other people?
-"Yeah! When we went to do the follow up album to "Season of the Dead" we started writing the stuff for it and to me it sounded like, I'm not making this up, it was going into a Metal Church, Fates Warning, Queensryche direction and they wanted me to start actually singing and stuff and I didn't want to do that. So it came to the point where either they were gonna kick me out or I was gonna fire them, so instead of a lot of things we just broke up. But they just totally didn't want to do any heavy stuff anymore."

What were you doing basically from the band broke up uptill now?
-"I haven't really done a whole lot of anything musically! I did a solo album which was a pure like Thrash album, it was more along the lines of early Testament, Exodus, Destruction, you know that sort of stuff. Since then I haven't done anything other than sit around watch Horror movies and I wrote some lyrics up at that time and started writing a book on Horror movies. And that was basically about it, I got fed up with kind of, what you were saying, the lack of enthusiasm and everything that was going on with the scene in general."

Why did you decide to start Necrophagia again now?
-"Well, something that I always wanted to do again, I mean, I never wanted to quit, I never lost interest in Necrophagia but it was just the matter of finding the right people that had the same common goals that I have. And at this point now we do have that, we all see things the same way so that is good!"

Is it the same spirit as back in '83?
-"Actually, it's even better because with this now it's not just me that has to do everything, back then a lot of the stuff I had to come up with everything on my own and with these guys, everyone is equally as creative so I mean that brings up the spirit a lot better and just makes everything more intense. The new album, Anton Crowley wrote almost the whole album musically."

As you said you are very much into Horror movies. What does these movies give you?
-"They mean everything as far as my personal life and Necrophagia. Since I was a child I've been into Horror movies, starting out watching the old Hammer ones with Christopher Lee and stuff. I just basically built the whole concept of Necrophagia around that and you know, it's not just an image. A lot of people and a lot of bands do cer-

tain things for images or attention but back when I started this noone else was doing it and it was something that was important to me so it was easy to come across with it in the music."

Do you find it difficult to create Horror feeling in Metal?

-"No, it just kind of comes natural, it's nothing that we really have to think too much about. When our guitarplayer writes riffs and that, I mean, a lot of times without any samples or anything it just evokes a feeling like something that you would see in a Horror movie, a corpse rising up from the ground or something. The certain macabre riff that he will write will sound like something that could be in a Horror movie."

You re-released some of your old demos through Red Stream in 1996. Had that material basically been unavailable since its first release?

-"Yeah, and that's out of print now too, that was called "Death is Fun". But we are probably gonna re-release that again with an out of print bootleg album that was called "Ready for Death". That was…"Season of the Dead" the original recording was some different songs that was done like in '85 and we didn't like the way that it turned out so we re-recorded it and then the original recording got bootlegged and we are gonna put that out with the "Death is Fun" and probably even some of the real early demo tracks from '83 and call it "A Legacy of Horror, Gore and Sickness". And Maniac wrote like a big introduction for the CD and stuff."

You also have a project called Eibon which will include some Norwegian musicians. Why Norwegian musicians?

-"It's not just because they are Norwegian musicians it's just that those people are my friends and they have the same kind of spirit and the same kind of attitude that I have and there is not very many people left that have that same outlook, so with Fenriz and Maniac and Blasphemer, we just all have the same kind of appealing towards the music and life in general."

You're gonna record this in Norway!

-"Yeah, I'm guessing some time this Summer. It was supposed to be in the Spring but it's just been pushed back due to all of our different schedules, Maniac is gonna be recording with Mayhem and Blasphemer was doing the Aura Noir thing, so as soon as that stuff is out of the way then we will get into the studio."

What position will they have in Eibon?

-"Maniac and I will both be doing vocals, Maniac will also do some keyboard type of things and samples. Maniac has got a side band called Voluspå that is really good and he'll combine some of those elements into it as well. I don't think Samoth will do it. He still probably could, he was interested but at the time when we were gonna do it they were writing and recording the new Emperor so I have to wait and see if he contacts me to see if he is interested."

Necrophagia got back together basically at the peak of extreme Metal. Do you find it difficult to get attention in the jungle of bands that exist today?

-"No, not at all! It's been pretty much the opposite, it's selling really, really well and we get a lot of interest right now from fans and press and everything. We seem to appeal to Black Metal, Death Metal, pretty much equally. Because I don't think we really sound a whole lot like either one of them exclusively, I mean, we definitely don't sound like any other Death Metal band."

Jenna Jameson is appearing in the booklet wearing a Necrophagia t-shirt. How did that happen?

-"She's a good friend of mine, I met her in a club a few years back, she's pretty much like the biggest Porn star over here in the US, maybe even in the World, I'm not sure. She's into a lot of heavy music and stuff too so I've kind of been friends with her over the years."

The visual aspect!

-"We are gonna do a video and a lot of people would agree to when they see a lot of the stuff that's gonna be in it. It's gonna have a lot of, not just gore, but a lot of blasphemic scenes with a nun getting raped and pregnated, flood, stuff like that. And she's gonna give birth to the Devil's child. It's gonna be more like a Horror movie, it will have clips of us playing in different things like graveyards and mortuaries and stuff but it will also have a lot of feeling like a Horror movie because it will probably be like 20 or 30 minutes and it will be directed by Jim van Babber who did a lot of Horror movies."

Any plans to play live?

"Possible the Dynamo festival, and we are definitely gonna play on Halloween of this year but as far as a full tour probably not this year with doing Eibon and the next Necrophagia album."

How far have you come with the new material for the next Necrophagia album?

-"The new material, we have got like three songs done and one of the heaviest ones is a new one that Wayne wrote, our drummer, and it's called "Returning Corpse, Blood to Fire" and it is just completely heavier and sicker than anything that we have on "Holocausto De La Morte". But we do have a mini-CD coming out later this year called "Black Blood Vomitorium" and that was inspired by a dream that I had about Euronymous a few years back."

What kind of philosophy is it behind the music and the lyrics?

-"Horror, the Apocalypse, just feelings of wild disgusting…end of the World, genocide, my personal views on things sometimes shouldn't probably be in print, you know what I mean! I have a very strong personal view on a lot of the things that go on in the US, you know. But I try to pretty much leave those out except for maybe a song like "The Cross Burns Black", if they look hard enough into that they can see some of my views."

The background for creating Eibon?

-"It was just that Maniac and I have been friends for so long and he's a big fan of Necrophagia the way I am with Mayhem and we just figured that it would be a great thing if we could actually combine ideas and get together and see how it would sound. It was kind of Mayhem and Fenriz coming up with the inittial ideas."

How is Eibon going to differ from Necrophagia?

-"It will be completely different! I would say pretty much a Black Metal band as compared to where Necrophagia is as I said really is not Black Metal or Death Metal but Eibon will probably be much more in the vein of Black Metal than what Necrophagia is."

It has been many similar projects like this lately, do you fear that it might be overlooked due to this?

-"No, not really! I think that this is something that is more personal than what a lot of others have done. It is definitely not something to make money or to gain attention because at this point I don't think that Necrophagia, Mayhem or Darkthrone need anymore attention. It has nothing to do with as far as how the public will perceive this, it has everything to do with just friends getting together and see what we can come up with. I realize there exist so many side bands and so many side projects and that but this is just something were we want to get together and see what we can come up with."

Who's writing the lyrics for Eibon?

-"I am and Maniac is, I'm not sure if anyone else is contributing but I know that Maniac has some stuff written and I have a few things written."

But you are writing all the lyrics for Necrophagia. Do you need to be in a special mood to come up with the lyrics?

-"Yeah, for sure! I kind of isolate myself for a while and just sit around and put on some Horror movie soundtrack music, like for The Beyond or something, and just sit there and try to get into a different frame of mind and really come up with something different. You know, if you really look at the lyrics they are a lot different than say like Cannibal Corpse or someone, it's just not "stab you in the throat…", I try to come up with stuff that evokes a feeling of horror. Sitting there saying "casket seal shut, still I remain" and stuff, it's a lot different than saying "I stabbed your eye" hehe, and all this stuff. I'm not into the silly outlandish gore lyrics you know, I try to give them a personal touch."

Do you feel that you give a message with the lyrics?

-"No, I don't look at it as a message so much as…a Horror movie done through music is the way I look at it. They're more like stories or things that interest me than actual messages. But "The Cross Burns Black" does have a message in it, that's probably the only one! Basically it is about a race war and that's it. I just think that things within the Racism issue in the US are building and building and building and I think that eventually it's gonna come to head and there's gonna be some kind of an outbreak, whether it be on a small scale or a national scale."

I also suppose when you started out in '83 it was a lot easier to be extreme and also gain attention through that.

-"Oh yeah!"

What do you feel bands need to do these days to be extreme, because everything has basically been done?

-"That's a tough one, I think that's why so many bands are relying on image, you know. They have this Goth image or this image with these naked women all around them or this vampire stuff, you know, if they want to do that, that's fine but you hit the nail on the head when you said everything has been done, it's hard to do something that hasn't been done and that's what it takes to get noticed. I don't know, my whole concept and my way of thinking is along the lines of horror and gore and you know, that's been done a million times now but at least I can look back and I can say when I started doing this there was noone doing it you know, absolutely noone with that whole idea. It's a lot harder to get noticed now than it was back then. When I started they used to say that I made Tom Warrior sound like Boy George in a lot of magazines, and I was just singing at that time as extreme as I could which hadn't been done yet. So that helped you know, it always helps if you're an innovator instead of a follower."

Extreme Metal seems to have reached a wall where it is very difficult to climb over the wall and create something new, very much giving boost to the number or retro bands appearing these last years. Do you see extreme Metal to be able to develope even further?

-"I think that it can definitely get further in some ways. We will keep taking it further ourselves, we have different ideas coming up for our next album to make it a bit more extreme but I think you're right in some aspects and I think you've seen a lot of people repeat themselves or repeat what's been done by someone else before and try to rehash it as a new idea but someone that has been around for a long time is gonna see it for what it is you know."

Do you still find it magic to be a part of the extreme Metal scene?

-"Oh yeah, most definitely! You know, from my point of view this really makes life worthwhile. It is something that's been inside me for a long time and to finally get a lot of these ideas and this rage and everything out is a very good outlet for me. So I mean, the scene in general definitely isn't what it used to be but I mean as far as the way I personally feel, I love doing this now probably more than ever."

What's going on in your head when you don't do music or watch Horror movies?

-"It sounds weird but I'm always, even if I'm not directly doing something you know my mind kind of always thinks along those lines. I'm always thinking of something different, a different idea that I would like to use for a Horror movie or for a Necrophagia song or for an Eibon song, it's like as soon as I wake up, I had a dream the night before and I'd already be thinking jotting down something so it's pretty much like I have a one track mind. Of course I like to take a break for sex and stuff, hehehe, get drunk and stuff but that's the whole thing, it's not just an image for me or for the band in any way. It's just totally what we are into. Our drummer Wayne is, that's one thing that really helped this band, he's as much of a fan of Horror as I am and he's got like thousands of videos too and it's helping because it keeps things interesting now that he's really contributing to the lyrics and the music for the brand new album. I'm not sure but at this point our next album will probably be called "Invocation of my Demon Brother". It's a song that I wrote probably around six months ago and it's just about bringing back a person that was deceased through rituals that you didn't want to see leave in the first place."

If you would write the soundtrack to a Horror movie, what movie would you write for?

-"Something along the line of "The Beyond", that's a great movie. It will have to be something very unnerving, very gory in parts and something that taps into your real fears but if I could write the music to any movie it would be "The Beyond". I totally love that movie!"

Is there any other movies apart

Maniac in Eibon

Necrophagia fan and vocalist for Mayhem, Maniac did a song on the new Necrophagia album "Holocausto de la Morte", and as he is also parttaking in the project Eibon together with Killjoy we had no other chance than to get a few words from him as well!

Please say a few words about "Hymns of Divine Genocide" which is the final song on "Holocausto de la Morte", made by you!

-"I had known him for a while and been in touch with him but at the end of the 80's we kind of lost contact since I was moving around a lot and I guess it must be a couple of years ago I suddenly got a letter from Killjoy where we established the contact again. Everything was like it used to be, of course some things had changed but we had a very good contact and then I met him at the Milwaukee Metal Fest when we (Mayhem) played there. Then I had already recorded this thing here because Killjoy asked me if I could make…at first he asked me if I could make an intro and I made that and then I made another thing which I sent to him which I thought should have been an intro but which he used as a track of its own. I think he added a little bit in the studio over in America. I got to hear the new Necrophagia songs and I thought they were just as good as they were in '86, '87. I have always been a huge fan of Necrophagia. For me to be allowed to do something on a Necrophagia album was really cool because I have always been a huge fan."

This song is a bit in the vein of your own project right?

-"It can remind a bit about it because I worked in a studio for two years now recently and I did a lot on my own. It is a project that is called Voluspå and I recorded something like 45 minutes with that material and I know it will be released in the United States now, even though I haven't signed a contract yet. It is a friend of mine over there, Tyler doing Ajna, it is a while since I have heard from him but I expect it to be released through them. It can remind a bit about "Hymns of Divine Genocide", perhaps apart from some difference in the lyrics. The lyrics will be more warlike in a way on this project. I made this at the same time when I did this song on the Necrophagia album and originally it was just something I was working on for myself but then I sent a few songs around to different people and I got a very good response and when I got an inquiery to release it then I did so."

What kind of music would you say it is?

-"It is a bit difficult to say! Some of it is noise so it can remind a bit about the good old NON while other parts of it again are inspired by Blood Axis, I have actually heard that it resembles Blood Axis too much! It is more that kind of thing, it is synth and only analog but it will be more in that direction. A bit Industrial, a bit more atmosphere kind of. I have worked a bit with these kind of things now only by myself apart from Mayhem and on the new Mayhem album me and Blasphemer will most likely make a sort of intro but a lot of the same way of working as with Voluspå."

Is this something that will only be released in the US?

-"At the moment yeah! I remember I sent one song to Cold Meat about a year ago and I didn't even get an answer from them so it will only be the US for starters."

How are things going with Eibon?

-"It is a bit uncertain because me and Killjoy discussed this almost a year ago I think and then it was specific, and then we talked a lot about it in Milwaukee and we found out that both of us really wanted to make something that had a bit of that old feeling, a bit like old Necrophagia mixed with a little bit of "Deathcrush". And both of us like old Hellhammer so I expect a little input there as well but at the same time it will be up to date, it will not be a retro thing which people are so much into these days. But I am not sure since Mayhem have been extremely delayed with our new album and during this Summer and Autumn we will be extremely busy with that one and tours. We talked about doing something during the Summer but then it was uncertain with Anton Crowley because he is really busy as well. Another thing is that I am becoming a dad so I don't think there will be so much music for me the first couple of months and I expect that to be at the end of May and then the following couple of months I don't think I will be able to do that much then. I have been thinking about the Autumn to start recording something with Eibon because I will always find some time, I have a lot to do both with Mayhem and my studies around that time so as long as Mayhem isn't on tour then it should work. We will do a tour lasting about three weeks and then we can just arrange it so it doesn't collide with that. The last time I talked with Killjoy, both him and Anton Crowley were making some riffs and such and Blasphemer will also parttake playing guitar and he will also try to make a few things. And I have started to think about lyrics and such things and then we are looking for a bassist at the moment. I have always wanted to work with Killjoy and if I in addition to that can work with Fenriz then it is totally great! And I also need to work with other things than just Mayhem because even though it requires a lot of my time I just have to let out some other things and that is one of the reasons why I am doing my project as well. But when it comes to Eibon, this Autumn should fit me really well. If everything goes as planned Mayhem will enter the studio around July, August. Eibon is something I really want to work with and Killjoy is a genious when it comes to that kind of music which he is doing and then also to work with Fenriz. The closest I have been working with Fenriz was when I did some sound when he sang on a Aura Noir song. I really want that and then again I have known him so long now and I think it is extremely good that he has started to play a bit again, so I think this can be a very interesting project?"

Who will do what in Eibon?

-"Killjoy and me will concentrate on the lyrics and both of us will sing and I think that can be really cool since we have quite different ways of approaching things and I think that could fit nicely together. And he has got a lot of different ways of singing as well plus that he together with Anton Crowley are doing new riffs and we who are here in Norway should really have gotten together for a meeting and discussed it musically speaking. The plan is to send some material to eachother to get some constructive criticism from eachother and see what can fit together so I will be trying to set up a small meeting with us here in Norway." ■

from "The Beyond" that has inspired you?

-""Let's scare Jessica to Death" is a great movie, "Don't go in the House", we have a song that will be directly inspired by that movie, another one called "Children shouldn't play with dead things", that's the one that Wayne wrote: "Returning Corpse, Blood to Fire". And on the mini-CD there's a sequel to a song from "Season of the Dead" called "Ancient Slumber" and this song is called "It lives in the Woods" and both songs were based on the movie "Evil Dead". This song, "It lives in the Woods" actually has a breakdown, this is the same part that was in "Ancient Slumber". This song sounds directly like it could have actually come off from "Season of the Dead"."

But it seems to be quite the same development patterns if we compare Horror movies with extreme Metal, like the big movie companies are producing very commercial Horror movies, likewise with the big labels signing very commercial Black Metal bands for instance!

-"Oh yeah, they take the basic element and they try to strip it down and make it into what they want it to be, you know what I mean. I don't want to name any bands specifically but I am sure you know. I think that that type of bands is as much a disgrace as a movie like "Scream" or "I know what you did last Summer" or "Halloween" or any of those, yeah, it's always been that way. They did that in the 80's, they took some of the bands and tried to change them and put money into them and tried to make it something it is not, it ruins it. Yeah, you're absolutely right, they take a good basic idea and try to see how they can make it appeal to a larger audience, and a lot of the stuff, be it extreme Metal or Horror movies it's meant for an elite few, and they try to take that idea and make money off of it."

Remove the magic, right!

-"Yeah, exactly. Couldn't have put it better myself!"

So before we turn off the light, what about a few more details concerning the future mini-CD and album from Necrophagia?

-"The mini-CD will be called "Black Blood Vomitorium", it has a song about "The Beyond" on it called "And you will live in Terror". It also has "It lives in the Woods" which is a sequel to "Ancient Slumber" and a few other things, I think Maniac's gonna to something on that while he is in the studio with Mayhem. Our next album will possibly be titled "Invocation of my Demon Brother" and it has "Returning Corpse, Blood to Fire", "Silent Domain" and with each thing we do it is always going to get heavier and more extreme. I mean, we will never, never under any way go in any other direction. We won't experiment, we won't try to bring anything different into it, it will just get more extreme and heavier, you know. That's the main thing and I can promise you that we will never try to be something we're not. We do what we do good and that's the way that it will always be."

A few words about each track on "Holocausto de la Morte"

BLOOD FREAK

"Blood Freak" is just basically combined with the ideas of someone like Jeffrey Dahmer or Ed Gein, someone like that. A complete insane cannibal madman. Someone who not only wants to kill you but they want to kill you in the worst way possible. Mutilate you and then consume you.

EMBALMED YET I BREATH

This song has the basis of someone that was buried alive but they weren't really dead. Or if they were dead they returned to life somehow and they wake up and they're in their coffin and they are not really sure what's happened or why they are there and it is just them coming to grips with everything.

THE CROSS BURNS BLACK

Basically just about a racewar, war between races. That pretty much sums that one up.

DEEP INSIDE, I PLANT THE DEVIL'S SEED

This is an apocalyptic song, just a vision how Satan would return to Earth through impregnating a woman to have his child and as the Devil's child is born it completely corrupts the Christian values and the Christian morals, and exposes them for the frauds that they have been.

BURNING MOON SICKNESS

It deals with someone, say like not directly Hitler or Mengele, someone like that who in the past murdered a lot of people that they didn't think fitted into their scheme of things and it's like this person has just constantly lived on and passed their ideas on through different decades to be carried on untill their final goal of genocide that was completed.

CADAVEROUS SCREAMS OF MY DECEASED LOVER

That's one of my favourites! Basically a guy who goes out and he rapes a woman and after he rapes her he keeps her around and keeps having sex with her even after she is dead. So that her raper and violation never ends, it just keeps going on. Even in death she can't find peace, because he keeps violating her.

CHILDREN OF THE VORTEX

It was the one that I wrote, actually which should have been on "Season of the Dead", that's a really old one. Lyrically that goes way back to '86 or so and that deals with the whole "Hellrazor", the very first "Hellrazor" movie and it is just basically the story of that. The guy opening the box and everything, and the World and the people that came out from there.

HYMNS OF DIVINE GENOCIDE

This one was one that Maniac did, and it is just kind of the whole vision of the way things will be some day. It's like an outro to the album, it's his vocals and his lyrics and everything on it. ■

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Hypocrisy

Considering the fact that the harder forms of Metal are getting more and more commercial, it was basically not much of a surprise to read that Hypocrisy would continue anyway, due to pressure from their fans. The original story would tell that they had chosen to let Hypocrisy die, but they felt pressure from all the fans that begged them to continue, could it really be so that a band felt they had finished their mission and had no creativity left, but nevertheless continued merely because of their fans!. Was this really the truth? We had to find out, and contacted Peter Tägtgren for a closer view on this story.

By Patronizer

Hello, how are you doing?

-"I am doing fine! A bit stressy but it is working out just fine! Quite a few things to do but it is good that one keeps himself busy!"

What do you enjoy the most of all the things you are doing?

-"I'm not sure, it is mostly to record and produce for other bands. Not to record myself because it is so much pressure when you're working with it yourself, it is a lot easier when you get a band in the studio with finished songs and then you can go through it together with them and decide the sound and perhaps different melodies or basically just whatever. But when you are doing it yourself, you have written the songs it is difficult to focus, easy to focus on the wrong things, sort of."

You produce all your own music by yourself?

-"Yeah, exactly! That is the worst thing by doing everything yourself. But live is really cool to play, but it is only one hour that is cool, then the rest of the 23 hours is just shit. Sitting there and waiting all the time, that is the rotten thing with touring, but mostly the live thing balances it when we are playing."

Never considered getting someone else to produce your music?

-"Yeah, every time we have done a record I say that I will never again produce a Hypocrisy album, but then one is so damned stubborn and one doesn't trust anyone else either so it is so damned difficult. It would be very good to take the tape and send it to someone who could do the mix, because mixing is the most difficult of it all. But if we send a tape away then maybe it will sound like shit, so then again we are forced to trust ourselves. When I am working with a band then I stop thinking about the music when I go home, while when I am working with myself then I think about the music 24 hours a day, it is difficult like hell to disconnect the brain there. That is the negative side!"

Do you have harddisk recording in your studio?

-"Yeah, I have that! I have just bought a new computer, I have just gotten it and it is supposed to be really good. So far I am doing adaptor, which is really good because then I don't have a harddisk that will crash. I am very sceptical towards that."

Is there a difference in the sound to record via a harddisk?

-"If you say it like that, what you record is what you get. It is the same thing with adaptor which is also digital. But if you do it via an analog tape-recorder then the sound will be a little bit warmer. But I have a lot of effects and things so I can make the sound warmer anyway, so I think it is safer to do it via a recorder which is a waterproof thing to make the sound stay there. So then it is up to each band if they want to make the sound warmer or not and then we always have effects to make it the way each band want it to be."

Is there a lot of bands that comes to Abyss who doesn't know what kind of sound they want?

Yeah, mostly we just connect the guitars and go through different amplifiers and listen to different sounds, just what they think sounds good. Then we agree on that, this is the best we have to choose between, and likewise with the drums as well. Then there are some that say they want the same sound as this band or that band but it is very seldom."

What bands have been the most interesting to work with?

-"Dimmu Borgir was quite chaos, it was a very long procedure, we worked for more than seven weeks and worked like hell with that record. We mixed it over again once because at the end we were so tired, everybody were disagreeing with like "my guitar should be more present and my keyboard should be more present", it was just chaos! Then we just mixed it and listened to it and it wasn't good. Then two of them came back two weeks later, the singer and one of the guitarists, and then it was a lot easier, because all of us had had a little vacation from it. But apart from that it was really fun because it was a bit different on the new album because there is a lot of melodies and keyboards and such. We have a lot of different groups that are really interesting, like Abruptum for instance, that was the most strange band to work with. We locked ourselves in the studio for 24 hours and there were blood everywhere and real chaos. But those things are what makes it fun, when it is something different."

Is it boring just to produce Black Metal and Death Metal albums?

-"It depends, I have been lucky and gotten many good bands so it hasn't been like "fuck, how bad this is"! Mostly it is really good so it has been easy to work with it. We all have different tastes, maybe I think that the snare drum should be louder or the guitar, but maybe the band think it should be like that. Then we have to do a compromise but mostly it is also going good to mix it."

Do you have a lot of power when you produce?

-"I am not a selfish person so I always ask if they think it sounds good. I never say that they have to do it this way or that way, but if the musicians in the band can't fully agree then I try to explain to them that this will be the result if you do it like this. One has to be diplomatic first and then also try to explain because I mostly know how it will end when the mix is done if they do it a certain way. Sometimes the bands don't give a shit about that, then they will get it that way, then I can't do anything about it!"

You have just released a live album with Hypocrisy called "Hypocrisy Destroys Wacken". What was special about this live gig?

-"It was a tremendously great gig, probably among the best we have ever experienced. The audience was really great, and originally it wasn't meant to be a live album at all. The background was that we were supposed to record a live video because Nuclear Blast had hired a videoteam and they had hired recording equipment and studio equipment so that everything would be separated so that we could mix it afterwards the way we wanted it to be. But the pictures were done immediately, while we were playing they sat out in the bus and made it. Our sound guy mixed it all together for us and then he said to us that we should release it as a live album because it sounded really good. We listened to it and everyone in the band agreed. So then we released the live video and album at the same time. There are some different versions of the songs, we like the oldest songs almost best because they really sound more brutal than on the records, the first second and third albums we released."

HYPOCRISY
THE FINAL CHAPTER

What makes a gig really great?

-"Luck! I mean, we hadn't played for two months before we entered the stage. We were out on a tour in March and then we almost didn't play after that. Perhaps first in August, we rehearsed a week before so it was luck, no strings were broken and noone lost the drumstick, it was just floating ahead really well!"

You also have four studio tracks on this live album!

-"We wanted to give a little bit more than just a live album. It is cool to listen to a live album but it is also interesting to listen to something you haven't heard before, if you like the group of course! The two first songs are really a demo for the new album so "Time Warp" and "Untill the End" will be on the new album but in new recorded versions. Then this "Fuck U" song is a bit more The Exploited, GBH, Punk thing. Just a thing we did last year for ourselves, nothing we planned to release at all. The last song "The Beginning of the End" should originally have been on the "Abducted" album but we thought it wasn't good enough to be on the record, so we just saved it. It feels like something a little bit extra to include four bonus tracks because I think it gives a little bit more value for the money. Originally we wanted to sell it for a mini-CD price but our company thought that noone would take it serious if we did so, so then we were forced to include something extra."

You had a farewell tour a while back, weren't you supposed to give an end to Hypocrisy?

-"I decided something like three months before "Final Chapter" was done and then afterwards when we had done the album and it was about to be released our record company were pushing us all the time and telling us that we shouldn't stop and bla, bla, bla. Then we just said that we would put it on ice for a while after "The Final Chapter" and then take it easy for a while. We haven't released an album for two years now and usually we release and album within a year since the last one. We said that we would do it the way we wanted and when we felt the time was right. It was a lot of quarrels with the label after the "Abducted" album because they didn't do any advertisements or anything and there were a lot of personal problems we had and the other guys never wrote any music and it was just chaos, everything. So I was damned tired of the whole music industry and I just wanted to get away from it. That's why I said I wanted to quit but then again one should never say never. Then I went out prior to the release of that album and said that we would probably do another record but that it would take a while. I don't want to rip anyone off so that they just think we are doing this for the money or to try to hype anything. I said it black on white that it would not be the last record but that it would take a while before the next one would be released."

Why did you decide to continue?

-"The coolest was that in 1997 we played the Milwaukee festival and it was just this totally unbelievable thing, I think it was something like six or seven thousand people and we had never played in the US before, except me when I lived there but it was just with some demo bands, and I was going on the stage to connect my pedals and then I just hear seven thousand persons yelling and I thought it was Venom that was behind me on the stage or something but then it was me they shouted at. It was like: shit! This was also a super gig, everything went really well! Then all of a sudden it was great , so it wasn't like we felt we just had to do it. It turned a bit there as well, and we had a meeting and went through a lot of things and said that everyone in the band had to help out, and likewise with the label. I mean, when it came to advertising for "The Final Chapter" the boss just said that I could get advertisements wherever I wanted. Just write it down on paper where you want advertisements, how big and if you want black and white or colour! No label is doing something like that, so everythig turned around! So if they don't do their part then I just won't give a shit about it. Now everything is working out really well, we have always gotten along nicely but it was just that certain things didn't work out that well at the time."

But to release one album a year, that is a lot!

-"Yeah, but we have always been very productive but now it will have to stay calm for a while! But we have recorded the album, it has just been finished so I think it will be released the 25th of May. Then we will see what happens then. We will play some festivals this Summer at least."

But no tour?

-"I really don't know! There is so damned lot of work to go away. First there is a lot of work prior to it due to the fact that we never rehearse as a band, some bands rehearse once a week or twice or three times a week, while we rehearse perhaps twice a year! We rehearse prior to tours and then we can rehearse a bit before we record an album, that is the only thing! Otherwise we never rehearse, we are separated writing songs and then choosing what to use when we are recording the album."

What can you tell us about the new album?

-"I would say that it perhaps is a mix between "Abducted", "The Final Chapter" and perhaps Metallica's "Black" album. It is a very wide album, a lot of mid-tempo songs but there is also many calm, heavy and depressive things which we use to have, and then also fast songs. We also have this Pink Floyd kind of song, so it is quite diverse. We never plan to do an album like this or like that, we sit at home and do a riff and then we think it is really good and then we are continuing to build it untill the song is done. Then the result is what it is, whether it is a fast song or a calm song or a heavy one or whatever. It is nothing we are planning in advance, then we pick out the best song in the end and then each song will have its own style. There will also be a lot of different ways of singing as well. Not that much deep Death Metal singing but more Black Metal screaming mixed with totally clean vocals, a lot of different styles on vocals. Now we dare to do a bit more, try a bit of different things. We have never been exactly afraid of doing something out of the ordinary but we have never tried to push the limits as much as we have done on this new album. We are satisfied and that is the most important aspect."

You are writing the lyrics in the band and they are quite alien focused.

-"The reason why the album was called "The Final Chapter" was because it was devided into three chapters, four

songs are chapter one, then the next four songs are chapter two and the next four are chapter three. That is the reason why it is called "The Final Chapter"."

It didn't have anything to do with this being the final Hypocrisy album?
-"No, it didn't have anything to do with that. It was just because of the lyrics."

What it said on a press release from Nuclear Blast was that you continued because of pressure and demand from you fans!
-"It was actually a lot because of that as well. First of all this is something we decide for ourselves, it felt like we should go one more round and then we will see how it goes. It was such an enormous kick with "The Final Chapter". It has sold twice as much as "Abducted" so something happened."

Your new album was supposed to be called "Cloned"!
-"Yeah, but it will not be called "Cloned". It was supposed to be called that from the beginning but now several groups have the same title so it doesn't feel right so the album will only be called "Hypocrisy"."

Is this because the album is as close to the sound of Hypocrisy as possible?
-"No, I've more been thinking about this talk regarding us quitting during "The Final Chapter" times, now we are coming back again. Instead of calling it "Reincarnation" or something like that, so that people can interpretate it the way they want! Are we Hypocrisy or are we lying, do you know what I mean!? I think the album is so good now that it can work out having this title. I absolutely think it is the best album we have ever done."

What are the lyrics dealing with on this album?
-"A lot of different things, a lot of Science Fiction but also about the regular life like one song is dealing with cancer, that I am the cancer in your body that will consume you, just shortly explained. Then there are some lyrics about religion and some slaughter and blood hehe, quite diverse lyrics. But mostly it is Science Fiction and alien inspired lyrics. But I feel that we shouldn't overdo it at all. When we started doing these kind of lyrics on "The Fourth Dimension" with these out of the body things and some alien inspired things, noone else was doing it. So one shouldn't overdo it so this time the lyrics are a bit more diverse."

What is it that fascinates you about the Science Fiction or alien topics?
-"I am very much fascinated about space. Like this with when they did travel to the moon with Apollo and all these things which are linked to it. I am also very much fascinated about aeroplanes, when I was younger I chose between becoming a pilot or musician. It is really close to me this with flying, everything that has got to do with it."

As you mentioned a bit earlier, you lived in the US for a while. What was the background for that?
-"My former girlfriend got a job as Au Pair with an American family and then I got the chance to join. Then I started to work at a car wash and I started to meet several Heavy Metal and Death Metal guys. This was like in 1988. I lived in Florida so I saw all these bands coming like Deicide, Obituary and Morbid Angel and all these bands coming up. It was really cool being there at that time, and I got in touch with another band which was basically the only band I could choose which was more like Anthrax "Among the Living" style, a bit Testament Thrash Metal. Me and Phil from Malevolent Creation was jamming together a lot so we were doing a lot of Death Metal but we had no band, we just jammed and drank beer. It was a good experience."

Do you look upon Hypocrisy as a Death Metal band?
-"Basically yeah! But I think there is more to do, I mean, I want Hypocrisy to be really brutal but it should also be very heavy and depressive because it has always been like that as well. There has always been heavy songs but also fast songs. It is totally okay with me to do a lot of melodies as long as it doesn't sound ridiculous and smooth and such. It should be more depressive and dark. Hypocrisy is a mix between Death Metal, Gothic, almost half-Black Metal at times. To me, that is a perfect mixture. I think it is unnecessary to aim at one specific musicstyle, one can always mix things as long as it fits together."

How do you look upon the future of Hypocrisy now?
-"To take it really calm, because my studio is the most important thing and my family. For me, Hypocrisy is a hobby, I don't take it that seriously, I have never done that earlier either because if I had taken it really seriously then we would have been out touring all the time and tried to sell t-shirts and tried to make some money. And have a manager and all these things, I am just happy that I don't need to pay to release an album. I am so lucky that I have a label that can pay and push the album and then the album comes out, what happens happens! As long as we are pleased with what we have done. I write songs out of what I think is good, I don't write songs to try to sell and make money. I just do what I enjoy and the most important thing is that I am pleased with it."

You have released all of your albums on Nuclear Blast. Has it ever been a topic to change label?
-"No, we have never needed that! As I said, we have always gotten along really good, except for this little thing in between, but apart from that we have gotten along really good and we can call them and ask for some money and they send money. Everything use to settle. Likewise with the budget for our albums, they never say that we can't get this sum of money, it is never a problem with the money or something like that. It is never a problem to fly somewhere to do promotion tours or something like that, that I travel to the US to do interviews which the label pays for. They fly me down to Germany every time we release a record, then I sit at their office eating and do a lot of interviews."

Have you received offers from other label during these years?
-"Both yes and no! If we say it like this, when some bands are coming to my studio their record label is calling and always ask how things are with Nuclear Blast, are you done with your contract and such. Maybe trying to get me interested in their label. But we have just signed for the new album for four albums, so that is really good. We got a good advance and everyone is satisfied. There is no reason for us to change, the only reason would be if Nuclear Blast became too big, that is the only thing I am worried about! They are growing so damned much, the last two years they have grown like hell. That is the only thing I am worried about. I rather want to be at a half-small label and get really good respect and be pushed really well rather than being at a big label and just being one among the rest."

Are you still continuing with your project Abyss?
-"No, that will not continue! I don't think I can play better than what I did on "Summon the Beast". We have said that we don't know if we can do a better album than that, it is no idea to try, better let it be."

Are you basically just doing Hypocrisy and your studio, or do you still have something else going on?
-"I am almost finished with the new Pain, I have a lot of interest from big record labels like Virgin, Polygram, Warner Music, USG, SPV, a lot of labels so it is really difficult. Maybe one will be forgotten in these circumstances as well because these labels are really big."

You have released one album under the name Pain on Nuclear Blast, right!
-"Yeah, it was just shit! I got money to go into the studio a month to record that album since I had a lot of ideas that didn't fit into Hypocrisy. When I went into the studio I had three songs that was ready and the rest was written while I was recording the album so it didn't turn out very well.I have worked with the new album almost one and a half year, worked with it a bit now and then when the studio has been available so I have used a lot of time with this new album. It is sort of a mix between Rammstein and Rob Zombie, a bit more Techno, Dance, Industrial music. It is very commercial but at the same really heavy. I think it can be really good if someone puts in the money for promotion and such. It is the same thing there, all the music I do, I want to keep it at a hobby state because otherwise it just becomes too much."

With the new album being very varied, do you see this as a step in a certain musical direction for you?
-"I am not sure! We are really into the idea of doing a total Death Metal album lasting about 30-35 minutes, something like "Osculum Obscenum", in that direction. Just be in the studio for a maximum of two weeks, not thinking that much about if the sound is perfect or if we play it correct or not. Just go in the studio and do exactly as we used to earlier on, a maximum of two weeks to record and mix the album, and not sit there for one and a half month thinking about everything. I think this could be a really good record. And then I have another band which I sang for now called Lock Up. It is Nick from Cradle of Filth on drums and Shane and Jeff from Napalm Death on bass and guitar. It is like old Terrorizer, that album was really good! I am not sure when it will be released, they are mixing the album now in England. They came over to my studio two weeks ago and I sang on the record. It will bring Death Metal back again, everybody who have heard the material just think it is awesome."

Is this just a project for one album?
-"I am sure there will be more because it is really good. Sometimes it sounds like Terrorizer and sometimes like old Napalm Death. Nick is awesome at playing drums, he is like Lombardo, just in Death Metal." ■

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Always at the forefront of Grind Core and Death Metal was Earache, but what are they doing today! Are they at all interested in Black Metal? We thought it was time to find out, and got in touch with promotion man Dan Tobin to discuss both past, present and the future of Earache.

By Melankol

How did you get involved with music?

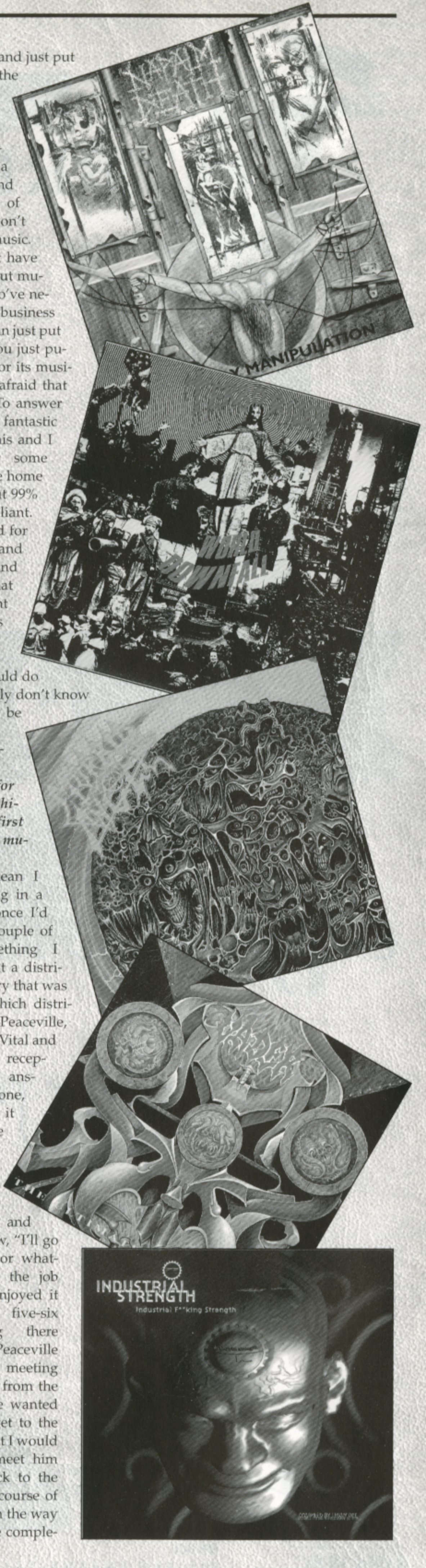
-"I don't know really. It wasn't like we had a musical household or anything like that, we just lived regular growing up back home. I'm actually from London which is about two hours away from here and just me and my brother was always into music, always taping stuff off the radio when I was a kid. Just Pop stuff you know and then later on I began to develope some more taste, I used to tape the Top 40 every week and every now and then you would get a Metal single in the charts or something, like AC/DC or something and I used to always keep those tracks later and just make compilation tapes. So pretty soon I had this collection of some AC/DC singles, the odd Motorhead singles, some Iron Maiden and it suddently hit me when I was about 13 or 14 and got to High School, and there were other kids there that were into the same stuff and we exchanged tapes and stuff and before you knew it that was it! Heavy Metal had stolen my soul and here I was you know! But it was only the usual stuff that people got into at that age, Iron Maiden particularly was always my favourites and still are and Motorhead, Black Sabbath, even some of the more mainstream stuff at the time like Scorpions and shit like that so it was no big mystery. I mean, I can't play a musical instrument, I was completely useless at learning guitar which I tried for about three months. I have no patience and I was going out with a girl at the time that was one of the top musicians in the local music college and I got this guitar and I was like "Look, I've got a guitar, I can play "Stairway to Heaven"" or something, and she just picked this guitar up and started playing something far more complex, and I was like "shit, why am I even trying here". I just gave up and started listening to music and getting into it from there, tapetrading later on. Doing the usual what everybody else does, going to gigs, meeting people, buying magazines and it got me to where I am now, which isn't saying much but hehehe...There we are you know!"

Was this what you wanted from an early age?

-"I don't know if you can ever say that, I just think I've been very lucky. It's like a job but its better job at the same way. There's very few people that can say that they actually are doing something that is almost their hobby as well or whatever. Sometimes that's a problem because you go home at the end of the day and you're so burnt out with talking about music and listening to music all day that it is very hard sometimes to get home and just put on something at the stereo without still having your music industry bullshit brain working. If I get in a mood like that I tend to be very critical of everything and don't really appreciate music. I wish I could just have that innocence about music that people who've never worked in this business have, where you can just put on a record and you just purely appreciate it for its musical sense and I'm afraid that it's gone forever. To answer your question, it is fantastic to be able to do this and I won't deny that some days you just come home and you hate it, but 99% of the time it is brilliant. I mean, I get payed for listening to music and going to gigs and drinking beer, what more could I want you know. There is nothing else in life, sometimes I wonder what I would do after this and I really don't know what that would be because I'm not qualified for somehing else."

You worked for Peaceville for a while, was that the first job you had in the music business?

-"Not really, I mean I started off working in a music shop and once I'd been there for a couple of months or something I applied for a job at a distributor in this country that was called Revolver which distributed Earache and Peaceville, they're now called Vital and the job was for a receptionist, basically answering the phone, making tea and it was quite a female job really normally so I got in the shortlist and there were five girls and me and I thought you know, "I'll go for the interview or whatever". And I got the job there and really enjoyed it and after about five-six months working there Hammy from Peaceville came down for a meeting and he phoned up from the trainstation and he wanted to know how to get to the office and I said that I would walk down and meet him and walk him back to the office. And in the course of the conversation on the way back I was just like comple-



tely kissing his ass basically, "I love Peaceville, I love Paradise Lost, Autopsy" and all this stuff and the next thing I know is that he phones me a couple of days later saying "we have a job going for a press officer, do you want to do it"? I'm like "what", you know! So I didn't think anything more about it and it was a Christmas holiday or something and after Christmas, the first phonecall I got when I got back to work that morning was him again saying "look, you gotta come up and see what you think, and if you wanna come up and have a look around the town and the office and everything". So I did that and I'd never been that far up in England in my life, it was like three or four hours from London, really a different part right in the north of the country, and I went up there and I loved it and I thought "I got to do this, it's about time I left home". So I kissed my mother goodbye and moved up to Yorkshire, and it was great, I really enjoyed it. It was just at an unfortunate time because a few months after I joined, Peaceville started, or Hammy started to think about maybe selling down a bit so he started talking to Music for Nations about getting a deal where he basically sold the majority of his company to them. It was great for him but unfortunate for the rest of us which meant that we had no job. Luckily I knew, again just by pure luck, a guy that worked here and their press officer was leaving at the time and within a week of being told that we were loosing our jobs at Peaceville I managed to get a job here so I was very lucky really!"

Was it a big surprise for you to see how the music business worked?

-"Yeah, tell me about it! Like I said, you go there totally innocent, just basically happy with music and I was so naive you know. I just thought you phoned up magazines as the press guy and they immediately did you an interview and they were so pleased to hear from you and you know. I soon found out that it was totally different from that, I mean, especially in England we don't have that much choice of magazines. I did enjoy just the feeling of being involved with all that on a first hand basis. When I went to Peaceville there were bands that were really happening at the time like My Dying Bride and Anathema and all these bands were really making big names for themselves and it was very exciting times to be there. Of course At the Gates was just starting to come through then really with "Terminal Spirit Disease" and when I first heard that when we got that at the office I totally freaked out, it was one of the best records Peaceville released. It was good times to be involved because everything was going pretty well and then of course I found out the harsh reality of the music business by the business side, with Hammy selling his business and the implications of that. I learnt pretty quickly, it was a good experience though!"

Did you do the promotion for the Darkthrone albums?

-"I did a bit of promotion for "Transilvanian Hunger" but only such as promotion was done on that. Obviously we had major problems when that came through. It was difficult for me because…there's a paper over here called the N.M.E., which is a big independent newspaper and it picked up on this story so they wanted to do a spokesman from Peaceville to talk about it, which I did. And they were really hassling me about "why do you support this Nazi music" and you know, all this kind of shit, and I said "look, for number one a record label should give their bands freedom of expression which is what we're doing here. We don't have do agree with it and we don't agree with it, but we're still giving them freedom of expression. And to my mind Darkthrone can do what the hell they want. You have got Christian bands and you have got Satanic bands, I would say that to be honest with you from my personal point of view, I am not in favour of the racist thing, that's down to personal politics and personal opinion which everyone is entitled to." But I wasn't going to make a big scene about it, I still love the album, a fucking great album. So the next thing I know, I'm getting a phonecall from the Jewish Chronicle, which is another newspaper in England, really getting on my case about why am I, why am I personally supporting Nazi music. And I'm like, "look, speak to the band about this, it has nothing to do with me, I happen to be the press officer in the middle." There was a big front page story on this newspaper about the whole thing and it was starting to get out of hand. And that's where I again learnt this thing about business, it is all very well being cool and saying "yeah, Fenriz can say what the hell he wants", and he can say what the hell he wants, but from a business point of view we were facing major, major problems with our distribution. Every single distributor apart from that guy in Australia pulled out of distributing the album, and if we hadn't done something about that they would have pulled out of distributing our label all together and we would have been out of business. It was that serious! For us it didn't look very cool and it didn't look very trendy and it didn't look streetwise to have to put out some kind of statement. I am vague about the details looking back at it, I can't remember whether Hammy pressured Darkthrone into doing the statement or whether they felt they had to do something of their own. We issued an apology, which noone really bought anyway and it didn't matter by that stage because noone was going to distribute the record for us, so all we could do was to try to sell it through mailorder and do what we could with it. But again by that stage, Hammy had bigger things on his mind, he was selling his company so it was in some ways an unfortunately time for everybody. But I still think, looking back at the album, I wish it had got more exposure because, in terms of actual musical exposure, it was a great record. I sometimes wonder if we would have done another record with Darkthrone anyway, I wonder what was in Hammy's mind. They were getting so far underground with their outlook and the following albums they released after that, you could see where they were going. Probably wouldn't have fitted a commercial label like Peaceville anyway. Maybe the contract was up actually, after that. It was a strange time and I really didn't get that involved with it because personally I didn't know the band that well, spoke with them a couple of times. The press wanted to make more of it, in my opinion, than what was actually valid. The Church burning thing had already been broadcast and it was kind of fashionable and they just kind of picked up on this thing as well, and it exploded into something bigger than it actually was. If you'd never heard of a bit of church burning and a certain murder that went on, I wonder whether anyone would have taken any notice."

Was it ever a discussion within Peaceville whether you should allow this statement on the album or not?

-"When it came through, we knew what it meant, it was pretty obvious! Then there was this thing from Fenriz about something about patronizing people for their Jewish behaviour, and as I said before, there were some kind of discussion but never like we sat in a circle and talked about it, but it was just Hammy thinking about his livelyhood and his business I guess! I don't blame him for doing that, he's spent years of building it and he wasn't about to see it falling to the ground over one album. The funny thing is when you think about it is that some controversy can work for you and some can work against you. We used controversy surrounding Autopsy to make them more notorious. We had this t-shirt that was taken from "Acts of the Unspeakable" that was part of the artwork and it was seized at customs. But we were quite happy for ourselves to press release the fact that we had these t-shirts seized, and how bad it was. And then we got to this kind of thing, so that worked for us you know, promoted Autopsy and promoted our label. Then we got to Darkthrone, slightly more touchy subject and we suddenly had to shut up and keep quiet, so it is quite strange how things work. I don't feel there was ever any big discussion about it, I just think it made perfectly good commercial sense to distance ourselves from that!"

Did this statement also affect the reviews "Transilvanian Hunger" got, like magazines boycotting the review of it?

-"I don't think we ever promoted it in the end, and if we did magazines ignored it largely. That's what I mean when I said it was going more and more underground, they were getting more of a killer reputation with the underground and less so with the mainstream magazines. In all honesty I don't think we even sent any promo copies off. It didn't do Darkthrone any harm in the long run I don't think!"

Was it a big change for you to come to Earache from Peaceville?

A.C.
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-"Yeah, I would say so! Professionally speaking, obviously Earache had sold a lot more records and was established on a greater scale, even down to the more basic level. The office that Peaceville had literally had holes in the floor, we had rats. In the winter it was horrible! I used to wear two pair of trousers in the office because it was so fucking cold, and yet when you come to Earache, I'm not saying it is any better looking around at the office now, it's a complete shithole hehe. It was just that level of professionality and we also had a bit more…I'd say that Dig is a bit more visionary than Peaceville were in that he is not satisfied with stopping for example on the promotion level, we can walk into any Metal magazine in the World and get some interviews and all that and he's not interested in that any longer. He looks for magazines that never normally feature this kind of music, and we have a great deal of success with that. I would say he is a very astute business man, sometimes people would say a brutal kind of business man but at the end of the day you got to keep your business running if you want to make a living. Don't get the wrong idea, it's not like we are all millionaires here or something like that, certainly not, but we do sell records and we kind of do it on our own terms. So it was a big change in that whole level. We were set up in America as well, which we still are, and things were

NAPALM DEATH
TORN APART

Formulas Fatal to the Flesh

moving on a bigger scale and we sold a lot more records. Just generally there are more people working here and doors seem to open a bit easier if you mention the word Earache compared to Peaceville."

And Earache have more bands as well. Do you find it difficult to please all the bands Earache have, I mean, Dig has gotten a bit of shit thrown at him these last years!

-"But I am not seeing any bands that are not complaining about their label. Our bands get a fair amount of freedom, we let them pretty much do what they want and they sometimes forget that. It's true, like I said, Dig can be as hardnosed as any other boss you have but at the end of the day I've got to admire the fact that he has kept a record label going for 13 or 14 years at a very high level of business and making a fair amount of money and selling quite a lot of records. Certain bands have made money out of being with Earache. You can argue whether they made money out of their own music or whether it was us that helped them develope that and all that kind of bullshit, but at the end of the day we were together. Certain bands, I don't know who you are referring to, maybe Entombed or some other bands, but I mean, when Entombed left the label and we released that live thing recently, they seemed to be very upset about that. One thing I'd say about that is that I don't see them turning down their royalties from that album, I mean, if they are that bothered about the album coming out then give the royalties to charity or something. We made the best of our efforts to make that a good package, I mean, it didn't look shitty and it didn't sound shitty, it was just sitting there. It's called exploiting your back catalog and any label would do the same. It's a really difficult subject because you can't please all the bands all the time and inevitably by their own mutation some bands get bigger than others and therefore become more of a priority than others, and that's just a fact of people buying records. But it is difficult, we've all had bands calling us wankers and all the rest of it and it's quite hard to deal with sometimes but at the end of the day I think most bands would agree that we do a decent job and we sell records you know. Napalm Death sold over a million records and they've never worked a day in their lives, so they can't complain. They are not millionaires but what would they rather be doing?! We have never ever told a band : do this, do that! When it comes to artwork and stuff like that we never said: do this, do that! If it looks shit we'll tell the band "this doesn't look so good, do you want to think about changing it?" If they say no we might argue about it for a couple of days and then just let them get on with it. The main thing comes down to money and it will always be like "can you give us some money to go on tour, can you give us this money for a video" and all this kind of stuff. Generally I would say if you look around, our bands are always on tour and our bands are always making videos. Things like that, so they can't really complain!"

But what you mentioned with Entombed is also the same as with Boltthrower and their compilation "Who Dares Wins". They haven't been too pleased with this released!

-"Yeah, I can understand that!"

But do you think it is right of Earache to release something when the band doesn't agree with it?

-"When they're on the label, no. When they're off the label, personally speaking, I would always seek their help really in putting it together because it makes it look that much cooler anyway if the band authorizes it and are happy with it. I think with Boltthrower, I am not sure whether we approached them about that and to be honest with you I think we probably should have. At the same time, I'll go back to what I said, they all make some money off it and I don't think it is really exploiting anybody, any fans or anything like that. Look at it this way then, we have Boltthrower for four or five albums or whatever over a period of eight years and if you added up the amount of investments we've put into that band with recording, touring, advertising and all the rest of it, I hate to think what that would add up to you know. Admittedly we made some money back through record sales and kept us all nice and warm during night and all the rest of it, but in the end of the day you've invested eight years of work and money into the band and those recordings are sitting there in your drawer, doing nothing. Why shouldn't you be able to capitalize on your investment and put those out. I just think it would be a lot nicer if the bands were cooperative on that score. If the band is really anti it, then we will take that into consideration and possibly even withdraw it but at the end of the day, if you were putting money into something over a long period of time and they then sign to another label and release a record, and you've got this stuff sitting there. The kids are also asking for it because they know it's in the drawer, don't know how these kids find it out but what are you going to do? You are going to exploit your back catalog because that's what the business side of it is. I really don't think that we would have distracted from any sales of their new album for example by releasing a compilation that a: if you are a Boltthrower fan you've got it already and b: if you are a new fan you might check it out later after you have got the new one. It's no big deal, we are not breaking any World records with the Boltthrower compilation sales. But I just think it is a lot nicer…in an ideal World everybody would cooperate and things would have been done very nicely, but it don't always work that way! Personally I don't think we've ever had a problem with Boltthrower and I really like the guys, they just over time got a bit fed up with the fact that they've been on Earache for a long time, doing the same old circuit. When you join a new label you get more enthusiastic people and let's face it, Metal Blade has done a very good job on the new album. It doesn't sound any different from the last lot of albums they've done but it's a good album and I wish them luck with it!"

Why didn't they want this compilation released?

-"To be honest with you, I wasn't aware that they didn't want to release it! What I think is that they weren't that aware of it, in an ideal World they would have been made aware of it, God knows why they weren't made aware of it. Even if they had complained about it, what would we have done? We would have, no doubt probably, released it anyway. I mean, that's a kind of horrible thing to say but it is not only Earache that does that, every label in the World would do the same thing. I remember Music For Nations picking up all the Peaceville back catalog and releasing them on double CD, things like that, without the bands' consent. Music For Nations tried to re-sign At the Gates to them, send them a contract that didn't even have the right members names on the contract. They had the old guys like Alf and stuff like that still on it. No label is totally blameless in these situations. I think Earache gets a bit of an unfair reputation because maybe we're a bit more open than others about talking about it and less likely to sort of just put a silence over it. We're doing a special edition of the Pitch Shifter album that was their last album for us right now, and this is in conjunction with the band and it comes with a bonus disc, and the bonus disc is called "Exploitainment". That says it all to me, we are exploiting it and the band know we're exploiting it, why not just be honest about it. I don't know that many other labels that would be that honest, you know!"

Tactics are very important when releasing an album and as you did with the Boltthrower compilation, you set releasedate a month before Metal Blade released the new Boltthrower album!

-"Actually it was scheduled to be released a month before and we actually talked to Metal Blade and they asked us would we mind, and we then changed it to the same day, which was really cheeky and we know those guys at Metal Blade and they said to us like "come on, how about moving yours back a month", and I think in the end it came out one month after their release, which Metal Blade were happy with. Think about it, Metal Blade were also getting some advertising, I mean, we put out adverts, they put out adverts, everybody was benefitting. The band personally probably think it sucks but it wasn't as kind of devious as you might make up. In fact, you might say some divine justice was done anyway because when we did press up the CD it was only after we pressed it, I don't know how many, five - six thousand that we realized that there was a click on the CD, and we had to recall all the CD's. So we wasted a lot of money anyway pressing them, so there were some justice there!"

You've been with Earache four and a half years now, how do you look upon the developments the label has gone through during this time?

-"It has changed a lot! Obviously when I joined the label it was predominatly Metal at the time, the classic bands like Entombed was still there, Boltthrower was still there, Brutal Truth was still there, you know we had Napalm Death, Morbid Angel, all in the prime of the tailend of the Death Metal movement or the Grind Core movement or whatever. But I mean, again it comes down to a lot to do with Dig's personal preferances and around that time, you got to remember that the guy had been doing the same sort of music for ten years or whatever and he pretty much…not him personally, but the label and all of the bands that had been involved with it have pretty much defined everything you could say about that style of music. I don't think anyone would argue that we have released the most classic albums of the genre, "Altars of Madness", "Scum", "Street Cleaner", "Left Hand Path", any of these albums are fucking classics and noone can argue with that! Where can you go from there? You've released all those and we could do like Nuclear Blast and release Benediction records till the end of our days, but what's the point? I think it comes down to a matter of integrity and basic, almost boredom I suppose. Dig got to a stage where he dominantly could with that style of music, he still loves it of course, that's why we still do

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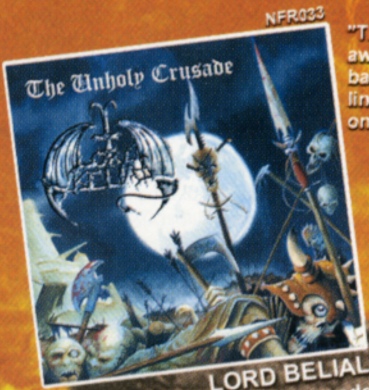
NFR033



The Unholy Crusade

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NFR032

Hypocrite
Into The Halls Of The Blind

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HYPOCRITE
Into The Halls Of The Blind

NFR034

Vexilla Regis Prodevnt INFERNI

"Vexilla Regis Produent Inferni" a innovative and experimental Metallic Black Symphony Of Death.

NOCTES
Vexilla Regis Produent Inferni

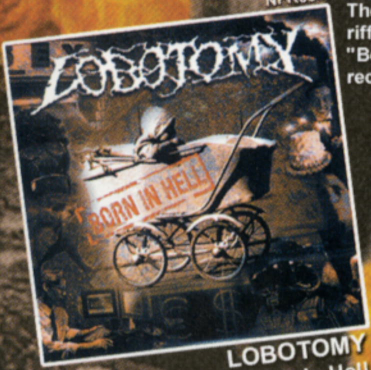
NFR031

Allegiance
VREDE

If you think that black metal have turned into something dull and predictable, then listen to "Vrede" and you will change your mind.

ALLEGIANCE
Vrede

NFR036



LOBOTOMY
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LOBOTOMY
Born In Hell

NFR035

Hymns
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INSANIA (Sweden)
World Of Ice

NFR039

WHERE WE GO, OTHERS CAN ONLY FOLLOW...
...WHERE DO WE GO NEXT?

V/A-WHERE WE GO OTHERS CAN ONLY FOLLOW
This compilation from No Fashion Records contains some of the best Swedish Metal bands at the moment. From the blasphemous Dark Funeral to the new Power Metal sensation Insania (Stockholm), this is a showcase of a label that is always a step ahead.

UP-COMING RELEASES!
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Morbid Angel or Napalm Death and all those bands but he was starting to get into the Techno stuff quite heavily and so we started to release some extreme Techno which personally speaking I'm not really a big fan of, but I can certainly appreciate the extremity of where it is coming from and Dig really gets off on it. So we started doing some stuff like that and around that time we also released a band called Dub War which was a great live band but again not particularly my style of music. They were a great live band and put out a couple of decent albums for the style they were doing and got a fair meassure of success. We sold a lot of records. So he was just trying to explore some other angles, we wanted to try to get into having a hit record after all this time. We've had a fair degree of success but with the kind of music we were doing, I mean, there's only ever gonna be so many Death Metal fans out there and I think we achieved the most. I mean, Morbid Angel sold a quarter of a million records with "Covenant" and I think you could say that there's roughly about a quarter of a million Death Metal freaks out there, you can't get more than that and it's never getting any bigger! And just for your own basic day to day…sort of keeping your brain working you have to look down other avenues, and I actually quite enjoyed it just talking to some different magazines for once in my life was quite good. I learnt a bit about a different style of music and we had Industrial Strength, which was the first compilation we put out with real hard Techno stuff. I think it came out in about 1995 or something and in America that year it was our top selling album, and it still sells something like a couple of thousand a month. Maybe we are doing something right? Dig always seems to be unlucky I thought, with the bands he signed were always popular…they were always great bands but they didn't get popular untill later. It was almost before his time, and I wonder if the Techno thing, he might be prooved right in a couple of years time! I certainly read a lot more about the extreme Techno scene now than I've ever done in the past, and you see certain bands almost embracing that. I mean, Cradle of Filth have just done some remixes that are not quite as extreme as the stuff we put out but getting there. Even Dark Tranquillity had some Techno stuff a while back. You have the band Ulver now which certainly don't seem to be afraid of going into different territories. A lot of people critizised us at the time and I can understand why if you are a diehard Metal fan but the fact remains, whenever we release a Metal record it is still killer, "Formulas Fatal to the Flesh", "The Haunted". We don't put out shit records and people seem to forget that sometimes! Just because we are not putting out "Mercenary" by Boltthrower is not the end of the World. If you want that you can still go and get it! We always had a bit more foreforth than that, you notice also that we don't sign like fifty bands a year, like some labels that will remain nameless for the time being. And that is another thing that really pisses me off, because I think that's something that is really killing everything, I mean, people talk about things that kill the scene and all this, but what scene that is I don't know! But if you open a magazine and you look at an advert from a record label that holds twenty-four releases that month, and you're an average kid who doesn't know half of these bands what they sound like or whatever and you've got 20£ in your pocket, how the hell are you supposed to know which one to buy? You pick one just out of chance, you take it home and you don't like it, you think it sucks and you've just wasted 20£. What are you gonna do, next time you are going to be even more careful or you're just going to say "this music scene sucks, I'm going to buy a computer game instead", that is a major problem these days! And Earache has never been one for signing that many bands, we sign two or three bands a year. Sometimes we don't even sign any bands in a year. I think some labels would do well to remember that quality comes not with quantity, but with a bit of thought and a few braincells."

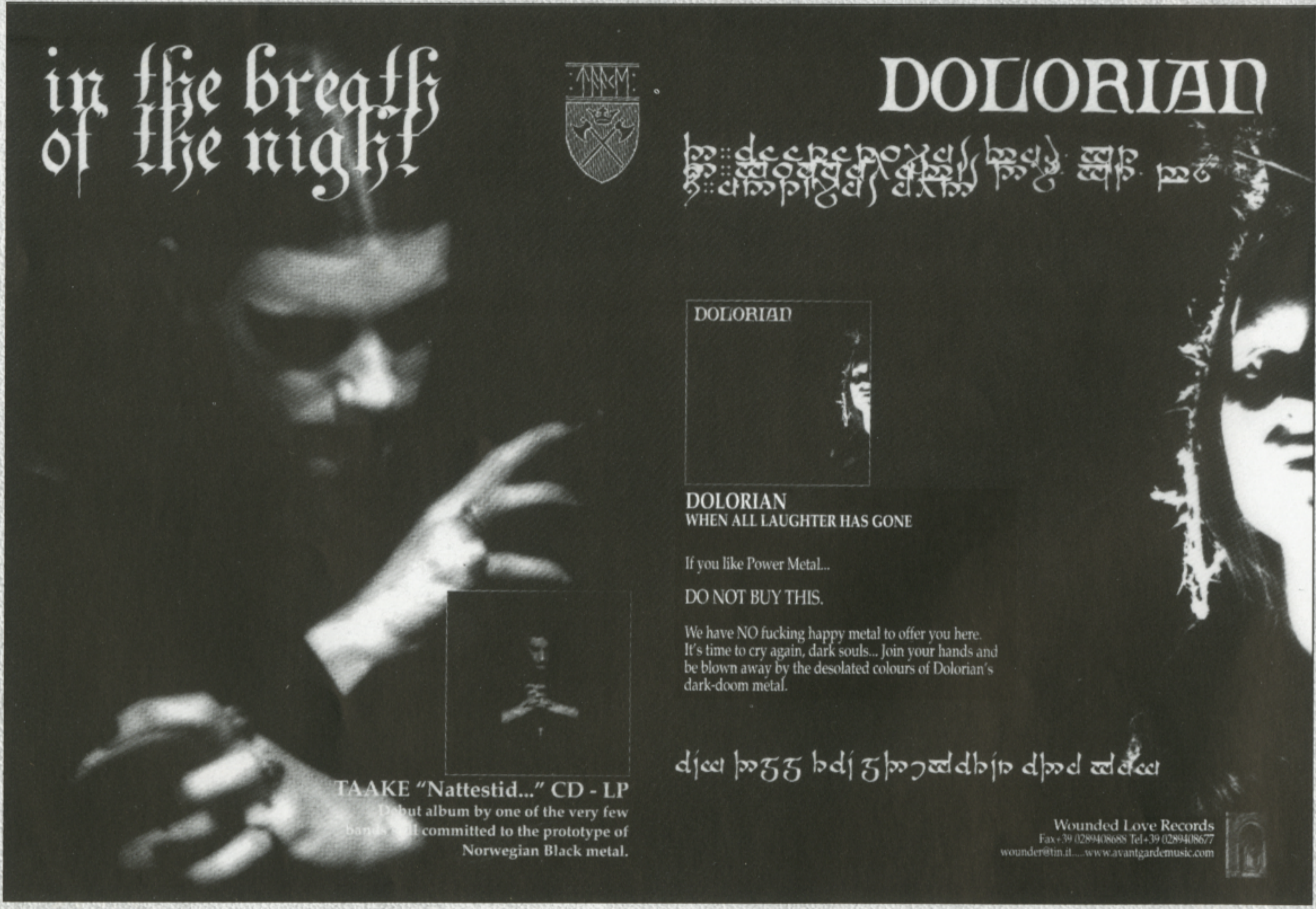
But here we are heading for the well known vicious circle, when there are so many labels they have no choice but to sign shitty bands to be able to sell records?

-"Yeah, unfortunately so but what they don't realize is that it doesn't work because the sales just get divided, as we were talking about there are potentially a quarter of a million sales, but they are just getting divided by two billion bands. So each band is selling two or three thousand and thinking that's great!"

It's very short term politics!

-"Yeah, and when you also know how many bands stay on a…they are signed to a label and get lots of publicity and a few adverts here and there and then they disappear because the label spend all the money and when it comes to adding up the money they're spending the money they've made at the end of the year. They look at it and then they just go "well, sorry, we can't keep this band". It's almost like acting like a major label like that and that is really no way to act in a scene that has music like this. This scene used to be without a doubt the best in every release that came out, maybe I'm being romantic but a few years ago everything was killer it seemed to me! These days, I can count on one hand the killer records I've heard so far this year! Moonfog is a good example actually, it's a good example of a label that actually does seem to think a bit before releasing a record and maybe that has more to do with financial stuff than anything else, I don't know! It just seems to me that those labels are the future rather than certain other ones which I'm not going to mention, hahaha! But I really admire labels like that, I admire Misanthropy as well and Avantgarde, labels like that who just think a bit before releasing any old shit. Those labels will go far I think in the long run."

What is obvious is that extreme Metal has reached a wall, and it seems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very difficult for bands to climb over this wall in order to create something new and exciting stuff.

-"What more can be achieved. People said that when "Scum" came out by Napalm Death, how more extreme can you go, you can't go any more extreme! You can be Anal Cunt or something but…"

But I also see a tendency to more beat related extreme Metal, like as you said with Electronic music and Techno, that this might have the key to the future of extreme music, because this can be very extreme as well!

-"I think so, I mean, the real extreme stuff…people should check out "Hellspawn" compilation we've put out. Some of it's very, very intense, some of it is not worth listening to in my opinion, but the Morbid Angel remix that's on there in particular are about as intense as you can get and what I find interesting is that a lot of these guys that are into the extreme Techno scene come from a Metal background. They just got bored of Metal and they look for something else, a bit more modern, a bit more up to date, and I think you're right, the scene will get bigger. I just wonder if people…I can never see a country like Germany accepting it. They're so stuck in their ways of listening to Hammerfall all day, nothing wrong with that, but I just don't see any open mindedness that is needed. But I hope you're right because I would certainly agree with you that we don't need to hear another, for example Darkthrone clone. If I ever hear another At The Gates clone in my life I'm going to kill myself. And we don't need another Dissection clone. No the thing seems to be all these Power Metal bands because Hammerfall got some success, well, all that stuff is great but I heard it when Helloween first came out! Something new needs to happen, there is no doubt about that, and that's why I think the Ulver record is a record that…I think it is a little bit too much this time around for people to take in actually but when it's good it is really good, when it is bad it really gets on my nerves, but if they just shorten that down a bit and slightly less pretentious with what they were trying to do I think they have hit on something there that could be something for the future. So we await Ulver clones by the millions! A lot of magazines starting up now that is kind of, in lack of a better word, Electro-Metal based. Look at a band like Rammstein from Germany, they sing in German as well and they sell so many records. They combine a bit of showmanship with some sort of Techno and a bit of Metal and I hope people are openminded enough to begin to appreciate that."

If we do look upon Black Metal, noone really expected it to take off as much as it actually did when the first Black Metal albums came out, and in a way I feel that the situation is quite similar with Electronic extreme Metal as well. It kind of has the same commercial potential!

-"I think it has as well! The most important thing you said there was that noone expected it to and from what I understand of it, noone tried to make it any bigger than it was. I mean, it was very localized and it was Norway and some shit was happening there and a few people knew about it. It just followed its own path and I think that's what's gonna happen with this style of music and going back to what I said earlier, I think Dig will be prooved right actually! And I think what will happen in a few years time lots of labels will be experimenting with the Techno thing. Because like you rightly said, if I'm honest, I love Metal to the day I die but I think it has gotten probably as far as it can go. You can keep having your off-shoots and you can have your Black Metal and Death Metal and your Thrash Metal and everything else, but if you are really honest at the end of the day it is very rare now that you hear a record and you say to yourself "I never heard that before!" You're just repeating what you love, and there is no harm in that but…"

…It gets a bit boring!

-"Yeah, certainly!"

One thing that has surprised me a bit with Earache, like Nuclear Blast, Century Media and Earache, these three labels were like the big Death Metal labels. And these labels basically followed the developments in extreme Metal and started to sign Black Metal bands, Earache haven't done that! Why?

-"Because, again it is working with your brain and not your wallet! I mean, everyone knows the story, we talked to Burzum, he stayed at Dig's house, this was just before I joined actually. He came over and I think Dig would readily admit that he thought about the money first. I mean, I think Dig tells the story that when Burzum was on the front cover of Kerrang, that famous issue, he was on the phone to Burzum within the day arranging a flight over for him, and we got him over and once again, if you come from the old school in this country of almost a Punk scene or whatever which both Dig and Hammy came from, as soon as they got Burzum over here and they were talking, it was cool on a musical level but as soon as they got on a political level, from what I understand Grishnackh was coming out with stuff that Dig just couldn't deal with. You know, coming from the scene which he came from which was very politically correct, it is hard to drive those thoughts out and some people actually believe that just because a guy is black doesn't mean you have to insult him in a way and whatever Burzum was saying, I don't know because I wasn't at the meeting, but whatever was said definitely put Dig off doing a deal with him and he went back to Norway and I don't think anything else was said. And from then on in, what could we do? I mean, all the best Black Metal bands was taken, we could sign a second rate one but…"

Don't you think you had the resources to get a good band?

-"They were all signed, Emperor was already signed, Burzum was obviously not going to happen, Mayhem was all over the place, Darkthrone was signed, what was we going to do? Immortal was signed, there was not a lot we could do, and I don't think Dig was ever the greatest fan of Black Metal anyway. Other than those big names everyone knew about, I suppose he couldn't really see anything that was coming through. In retrospect I think it was kind of cool that we didn't, we didn't jump on any bandwagon that was for sure, when we could have easily signed some second rate Black Metal bands which is what sadly happened later on and those labels you mentioned earlier are partly responsible. There was just nothing available, we talked to Emperor very recently, last year but unfortunately it looks like they are going to stay with the label they have now which is their decision, but I would have personally loved to have that band on our label, it would have been great. I think they are fantastic and their new one is just amazing.There is no sense in…Earache, a label that prides itself on signing the best, there is no point in signing anyone that is like…unless we find someone that is better than Emperor, what can we do, you know! We'd just end up looking stupid! And now it is so late to get involved with that stuff, it would just look stupid now and I mean, that would be jumping on a trend there and we are definitely not going to do that. There is only a few still, in my mind, great Black Metal bands out there and they are all taken! Actually Dig met Euronymous a couple of times, he actually came over to England and stayed with…according to Lee Dorian anyway, from Cathedral. He remembered meeting him in Coventry a few times, but Dig went over to Oslo with Napalm Death very early, I think maybe the first show they ever did over there, and he said he hooked up with him there, nice guy. They kept in contact a few times but never seriously and it is interesting for me to read the comments in that Lord of Chaos book recently, I think some comments contributed to Euronymous about…I think he actually mentions Napalm Death as a bunch of trendies or something like that, it was kind of cool because he was definitely down by the show and enjoying himself! Again, there's your public and your private personalities. So Earache was kind of loosely involved with Black Metal, but Black Metal originated in Norway as we all know and nothing was really happening here, we found out about it late, England was late on the game as everybody else was, and Candlelight had taken Emperor, there was nothing left. I think it was much better for us that we just stayed away from that stuff, and that's not saying that we will never sign a Black Metal band because if a good one comes along we are there, of course! At the moment it is not likely, is it! In the second wave of Black Metal that came out, if you call it that, I never really saw anything particularly great coming out from that. You got Dimmu Borgir and I know they get a hell of a lot of slagging off and everything else, but so what you know! They are doing what they want to do, and to me, I haven't heard the new one yet, but they make good records, all their records I have enjoyed! Gehenna is obviously a great fucking band, but after that, what new Black Metal bands currently creating a stir? None! The Black Metal demos that we get these days to the office are just horrible, disgraceful! I am not talking about whether they hold with the old spirit of whatever Black Metal is supposed to be, I am just talking from a musical point of view, they're shit!It seems to me that that whole thing is dead and buried and if certain labels want to continue exploiting that then good luck for them, but it is not for us!"

You never saw the potential of Cradle of Filth?

-"Yeah, we tried to sign them! But after they were splitting with Cacophonous, again Cradle kind of crept up on us. I remember them coming through when I was working for Peaceville, we did a tour with them, Anathema, At the Gates, Cradle of Filth were actually the first band out on that tour, we did some Eastern European shows and played some shows in England. I remember the first time Cradle of Filth was ever mentioned in Kerrang! and they were laughed out of the magazine! Now, you can't get enough of Cradle of Filth in the magazine and it is ridiculous, it is becoming a joke! Of course we saw the potential in them as soon as they were getting out of their

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deal with Cacophonous, they came up to the office two or three times, we went out with them and we had the contracts ready and lawyers were involved, the whole shit was going down, I even started a little file in my desk for Cradle of Filth in anticipation. Music for Nations were also in the runup and from what I understand we offered exactly the same deal as them and it came down to a democratic split between the band, two members wanted to go with Earache, the rest wanted to go with Music for Nations, and that was how it was decided. I have to say that Music for Nations have done a great job, they are the biggest band in the World right now for that style, making shitloads of money and playing sell-out tours. I just wish it could have been us because I think we could have done a great job with them, and maybe also retain some credibility for them which I feel ,they are probably going to hate me for saying this, it is probably beginning to slip away from them. I personally think musically they are great but they do set themselves up to become targets with some of the things they do, but that's their business, they can do what the hell they want. It would have been good to do them and I really wish we could have done that, not only from a business point of view but from a personal point of view, but it didn't work out!"

Are you the guy that is basically running Wicked World?

-"Yes! It is a bit pretentious to say that I am running it, I don't have any financial input whatsoever. Basically, going back to Dig again, getting into his Techno stuff, starting to get into more different styles of music, and he really lost sight of what was going on in the Metal scene from about '94 up untill about now really. Of course he kept an eye on it but he was never really as into it as he was previously, and I have always been fighting to get some Metal bands on the label and everything else. And one day he just said "why don't you do your own label" and I just went off and did it. It is cool for me because it keeps my interest level going here and as I readily admit, some of the bands that we do don't really interest me personally. I feel proud that we can give some of these bands a chance, give them a bit of help with Earache but just under a bit of a new label. Talking about Black Metal, I think we missed a lot of people that came along in the Black Metal wave and got hooked on to Metal and stuff, but a lot of the people that are into Napalm Death and Morbid Angel are probably approaching their late twenties now. They are happy with those bands and probably not so bothered about the newer bands by the same aquation, there's a lot of kids that are sixteen years old and never heard of Morbid Angel, and why the hell should they you know! To them Morbid Angel is this old band that they don't care about. The new bands to them are Cradle of Filth, Dimmu Borgir, Hammerfall, those are the new bands to them, and we've got to try to get those kids interested in what we do because Morbid Angel is just as vital now as they ever has been. That was another reason for starting the label I think, just to try and get some of these newer kids who probably think Earache is an old guys label, get them into the swing of things so we'll see if it can work."

There has been a void for the last years with Earache and Metal really. You were always putting out new fresh bands in the early 90's within the Death Metal genre!

-"That is certainly true! I think it came down to the fact that we didn't sign a lot of bands and perhaps people got the impression that we weren't looking for bands. At the time we had enough of that, remember, we are still a small label. There's like six, seven people working in this office here, that's all, and we were dealing with Morbid Angel, Napalm Death, Carcass, all these bands doing well, touring and selling shitloads of records, it was a lot of work. I think we would admit that we probably lost sight, slightly, of what was going on, for a little while anyway. What gradually happened over a period of time was that bands began to split, bands left the label and then we are suddenly looking ourselves in the face going "shit! what do we got left on the label!" Luckily, the last great Metal signing we made was At the Gates I think! We signed them at a time when they were really fucking hot and they made a brilliant album for us, and luckily we got The Haunted coming out of that as well. But other than that, yeah, we haven't signed many Metal bands, that true, because we are very picky! Or Dig is very picky, and we bring bands to him all the time but he will just turn them down straight. He's a man with a mission, he only has the best. I'm not saying the bands on Wicked World aren't the best because he obviously has to agree to those bands as well, but he does let me have a bit more freedom when it comes to that kind of thing. I am hoping that Wicked World will remind people that Earache and Wicked World is great Metal labels and I think so far the releases have pretty much matched it, we haven't gotten out and signed shitloads of bands and following that philosophy but just trying to put out a few different things and quality bands is what it is all about."

Would it be wrong to look upon the establishment of Wicked World as an admittance from Earache that they are moving away from Metal?

-"No I don't think so! Actually I would want it to be the other way around, I would want people to say "wow, Earache get back into Metal now". I would much more prefer to do that, I mean, there is no sense in hiding anything about that. It's not a desperate attempt to try and be cool with Metal kids because we don't need to do that. As I said earlier, we released the fucking best records people have heard anyway, so we don't need to become all pretentious and big about it! I just want people to know that we still release Metal records and we still release some of the best Metal records. I want to give people the sense that I had when I was a kid buying Earache and buying Peaceville products. I would buy almost anything because it had Peaceville on the back of the CD, I want people to feel the same sense of pride, they pick up a Wicked World record and they will at least know that this is a good record. I don't think you have that sense of loyalty to a label anymore, how can the big labels (not mentioning them again, haha), how can they have any sense of fan loyalty to it when you're expected to buy 25 CD's a month? That is not treating your fans with any respect whatsoever, that is treating your fans like sheep! That's why there is no fucking scene, because it has been killed by people like that. I just hope that people would look at it and say "yeah, Earache has gotten back into Metal, that's cool, but they are not exploiting us and just releasing a lot of shit." So it is certainly no bandwagon jumping, no trend jumping, you'll notice our three releases are very different from eachother and that is purely intentional. I dont want to paint ourselves into a corner. Intentionally it will be very diverse but it will be very Metal. We are doing this because we are releasing some quality bands and it is to make this label as good as Earache has been and is. That's the main intention, so we are not just going to sign any old rubbish from the demobox. I want people to associate us with Metal again, certainly!"

One thing I've been curious about is what went on at the Earache office when you found out that David Vincent had left Morbid Angel?

-"When we found out it was made even more bizarre by the fact that me and Dig travelled to Holland to the Waldrock Festival where they were playing. We had the worst journey I've ever had in my life. It is right in the north of Holland or something and we flew to Amsterdam and we got this train that was supposed to get us there in about an hour or something and we got a slow train and it took like five hours, horrible! And we got there and we were completely drunk, of course, and Morbid Angel were just coming off the stage and it was getting dark, and remember we had to get the train back again, so we get there and we met David and the band and it was like "sorry we didn't see the gig, how is everythig going?" "Cool, the tour is going great." He didn't say anything about it, this was on a Saturday I think, and he actually gave an interview to Headbangers Ball at the Waldrock Festival when we were there, telling Vanessa Warwick (at the time) that he was quitting the band, it was like this exclusive interview, and we still didn't know. It was only when we got back and we watched Headbangers Ball on Monday night that I watched with total amazement and he's on this interview at the same festival where we are standing ten yards away from him, telling the World that he is quitting the

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band and we didn't even know! So when we came in we were totally amazed and totally shocked. We didn't know if it meant the end of the band and obviously we were hoping not because it was the fucking biggest band we have and it would have serious consequences obviously if the band would finish. But luckily as we began to talk with the band it began to transpire that him and Trey had probably had a difference of direction, the way the band was going and obviously Trey prooved that with the new album he basically dominated the whole record and took it away from a more realistic Morbid Angel to a more kind of spiritual Morbid Angel. David was also married to Gen of the Genitorturers, she was doing her band and he was becoming more part of that. So in the end it all made sense but at the time we were totally shocked. It took a long while for them to come up with a replacement and I was still worried when I heard the record because it was so brutal, it was almost underground Death Metal all over again. But luckily we were prooved wrong and the record did very well. And I have to say, watching Steve Tucker on stage, he is brilliant on stage and has a totally massive presence on stage, and the way he plays the bass and the way he sings and everything is great. I don't think they've lost anything, I just think they have changed their outlook a bit more. And talking about credibility they've become almost like the fashionable band again and everyone seems to be into them again. Certainly the record sales would justify that. I feel a bit sorry for David actually because I don't think the Genitorturers thing is going as well as maybe expected. I even heard some rumours that it was all finished that band!"

One thing that amazed me a bit was that Trey put him down in the press!

-"Yeah, an interview in Kerrang! he was saying things about his lyrics, that Trey couldn't stummach some of the lyrics that were coming out from David, particularly in a racist sense. There is no doubt that they are going in different directions, David was taking it lyrically in a more realistic vein. "Domination" was certainly more about everyday problems in the World around us and I don't think Morbid Angel were ever about that, they were always on a higher level, even on the first album. I think Trey felt that some of the control was slipping away from his fingers. It is interesting to know actually that on "Domination" Erik Rutan contributed a hell of a lot to that record. I wonder if Trey felt he was loosing some of his control on the band, I don't know! It is his band after all and who knows what powerstruggles that went on within the band. I think also David had one eye on what Genitorturers was doing, I think he thought that it was going to be a major thing and obviously he's in close contact with his wife and she's probably putting thoughts in his head as well about what he should do and in the end he choose to do that. I am sure Trey is pleased with the outcome because he now has 100 percent control of Morbid Angel."

There has also been some rumours, likewise with Slayer, about as you said this Racist topic!

-"Yeah, again that started before I was here but it started with an English journalist who saw David wearing a badge on his jacket that was some kind of white supremacist thing back in the South or whatever of America. And this guy recognized what the symbol was and he questioned David about it and I know from my meetings with David, he's a very passionate guy and he is very opinionated and he's right and you're wrong a lot of the time, and you can't change his point of view. I can imagine what happened, the journalist said something, David reacted in a over the top way and before you know it there's rumours all around that Morbid Angel is a nazi band. The same old shit! The brief time I spent with David, he has his own views, it's a bit like Darkthrone, he has his own views and I don't respect those views but I allow those views, because what the hell are you supposed to do about it? You don't have to agree with everything and I don't think that Trey and the others ever held any views like that, I don't know! I mean, look at the band, they've got a guy from El Salvador in the band, a Third World country. It is entirely stupid if they are going to start saying shit like that with a guy from a Third World country, an Ethnic member in their band! A lot of people took it very seriously and the worst was in Germany where we suffered really bad. I mean, Rock Hard, untill the new album when David left, refused to cover the band. They would not interview the band and they would not do any live reviews or anything whatsoever. As soon as David left they were back on the phone and would do an interview with Trey! That's how seriously these rumours and stuff can start to affect you."

What is going to be the biggest releases on Earache this year?

-"This year we are going to have a few actually. I guess the Cathedral which has been out for a while, I don't know what has happened there but the band has been totally rejuvenated, everyone has fallen head over heals and loved the album. It's a great album, but if you ask the band it is one of those albums where they went in the studio and just put songs together. They really didn't think too much about it and now everyone says it's the greatest thing they've ever done. The next one is going to be the Godflesh record and unfortunately we have had some delays on that, it's not going to be out untill May now. Mainly due to the reason that the band are lazy. It is really hard work, we started talking to them months in advance about artwork and stuff like that and they never ever get anything sorted out! And we are just playing on the safe side so it will be out on May 17 it says on my schedule. That album is more, if people were into the "Love and Hate in Dub" record, it is more in that direction than it is "Songs of Love and Hate". More beat driven, interesting that we were talking about that earlier, but it is more beat driven than ever before. It requi-

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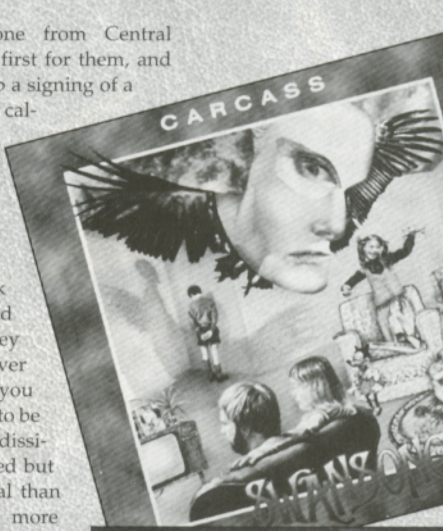
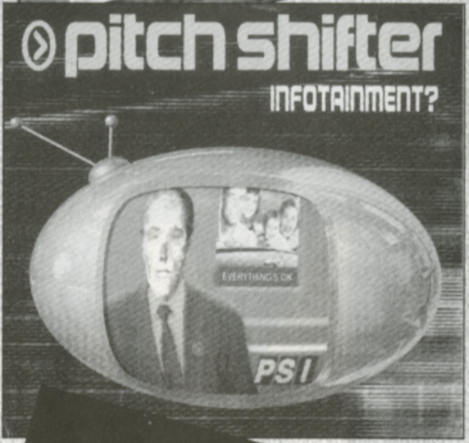
res a bit of listening but it is a great record and I think every Godflesh record is a great record to be honest. We are also going to be doing probably a Misery Loves Co., I don't know how many Nordic Vision readers are going to be interested in that one but they do very well for us and I think they're a really cool band and they have a lot of intelligence behind them. They are very sceptical of any press people and people like that, they rarely give a good interview and they are almost like a paranoid kind of band, but I think their singer Patrick has a lot of good stuff to say and he is very intelligent with his lyrics. We are going to be doing a new one for them, we are going to be doing a new Entwined record this year, which is a band that I feel is not noticed enough. They were on that Morbid Angel tour which in retrospect was probably the wrong tour for them. They should probably been on tour with some horrible Goth band from Germany or something. So we are going to do a new one for them and they have probably dropped the Gothic a bit more and done more Metal. It doesn't actually sound that far removed from the kind of Metallica "Black" album, approached with keyboard, so we got that one to look forward to as well. We may even do a The Haunted record this year, can't say for certain, they've got to get themselves sorted out obviously with the singer and everything but there is a strong possibility that they are going to do Dynamo and they should record another one by the end of the year. I know they've got a lot of tunes written so we'll see what happens with that! If anyone's going to the Dynamo, we have got Morbid Angel on! Iron Monkey are playing and we have got the Haunted as well and we are looking to confirm a couple of more as well. As for Wicked World, we have signed Hate Eternal which is Erik Rutan's band."

I actually thought he had signed with Full Moon Productions!

-"He was going to but they never really got that far with that, and then he gave me the demo when they were over last year and they are actually in the studio and recording right now, we got them in the studio before Morbid Angel is doing the American tour. Also a guy called Doug Cerrito who is in Suffocation is playing guitar on the album as well, which is great because Suffocation is one of my all time faves for the Death Metal stuff! I am really excited about that because I know that Erik is going to do a great job with that. I mean, you only have to listen to his contributions to the "Domination" record to know that he is capable of writing some good tunes and he is really confident about doing a good job. I know there is a resurgent, slightly, in Death Metal right now but I think this will blow everybody out of the water in terms of just a no bullshit Death Metal record. I was discussing with Erik the Death album "Leprosy" the other day and we were just saying what a great Death Metal record that is. If only people would use that as an influence rather than what people seem to be into these days. That's what he is lookig at, he is looking at a really brutal sound and there will be no bullshit keyboard parts or anything like that. That should actually be out in September this year with a bit of luck. Before that on Wicked World we have a record from this Finnish band called Dawn of Relic, who are a strange bunch to me! They are right up in the north of Finland and they don't really care too much for anything except making their music, and they make a strange combination between what can loosely be called Black Metal because they go for the blasts, but then they just sweep into these acoustic things out of nowhere. Kind of what Opeth would do, but even more extreme than that in the changes they make. The album is recorded and it is going to be out in May. The recording itself, if I'm honest, could have been better but we are working on budgets here and they know that and we know that. It was recorded in the same studio that Gandalf did their album so it is a good studio. I think it is going to be a good record but it is going to be one for the underground kids to get into, and those who love the kind of Dark Metal style. They are really into H.P. Lovecraft and shit like that, so that will be cool. We have signed Blo. Torch from Holland. They are probably on a more commercial side of Wicked World, a bit like the kind of Gandalf thing I guess. Very thrashy, I hate to say the word melodic, but they do play melodic...we're not talking At the Gates here! As I said earlier, I'd never sign a band like that! They just incorporate some decent ideas within what they do, a bit off the wall and a bit eccentric, they do lots of timechanges and stuff. Interestingly enough, they are the first band that Earache has ever singed from Central Europe! We have always signed English, Scandinavian or American bands! Never have we ever signed anyone from Central Europe. That's the first for them, and today I wrapped up a signing of a band from Sweden called Corporation 187, which have a demo out right now but I don't know what they have actually done with it. I don't think they've put it around too much, but they are an ex Slayer cover band, so that tells you what they're going to be like. They are not dissimilar to the Haunted but they are more Metal than that I would say, more Slayer. The guy on drums is a young kid and he is phenomenal! I am really looking forward to be recording with them as well, they are going to have a big thing coming up in Close-Up magazine for the next issue. And I'll tell you a little secret as this is Nordic Vision, about a signing for Earache! The contracts are done and they're signed I think, all the points are agreed, but I'll let you into the secret anyway! We are signing Mortiis! We have been talking about the diversity with Earache and that is not a Metal record obviously, I have been friends with him for a few years now and he came over to England and I hooked up with him when he came over and it was pretty cool. He was looking for a deal, and I didn't ever think Dig would go for it but he really got into it as well! We have a tape of the new album that he has done, "Stargate" which is far more advanced than everything he has done before. It is actual songs this time around rather than one song throughout the album. He has been getting a lot of good attention from a lot of different higher level media, magazines and stuff, so we are going to start working with him and see what we can do!" ■





THE HAUNTED

And that concludes our talk with Dan Tobin at Earache. Go check out their homepage at www.earache.com Is there a label you want us to take a closer look at, something special you have been wondering about? Send us a postcard and let us know.

VIDEO

1st Repulsive Festival
REPULSE RECORDS

Filmed during the first Repulse Records Festival in March 1998, including liveshows from Golgotha, Avulsed, Ouija, Reincarnation, Uncreation and The Heretic. All bands are Spanish, and the interviews with each of the bands are unfortunately also done in Spanish, so it isn't that easy to get some information from that. Each band play a total of four songs each, first two songs, and then the remaining two when the others have also done their two songs. First out is Golgotha with their melodic and emotional Metal. Far away from my interest, and live the band isn't interesting to watch. Really ugly vocalist with a terrible voice when he tries to sing in a normal way! Avulsed play straigh ahead Death Metal, and it works out fine. I am not that fond of just watching a band live on a stage and in that aspect none of these bands make a difference to me. But the Death Metal bands here, like Avulsed, are okay. The ridiculous Spanish "Black" Metal band Ouija is a big joke. Watching the suntanned, muscular dork with the ridiculous makeup acting like a fool on stage is nothing but idiotic. The way this "grim" guy is moving his hair away from his face is just like a real loverboy does, and the gestures he commits on stage are pukeable. Reincarnation is straigh ahead Death Metal, so is also Uncreation, and you get what you expect from them. The Heretic is the last band and they play a more varied style of Death Metal, with synth and different kinds of vocals. The show was shot with different cameraangles and both the light and sound is good on this video. So if you are a Death Metal fan and enjoy the Death Metal bands here, then this could be something for you. The video last for over two hours, and that is impressive.

1st Repulsive Festival
Golgotha - Avulsed
Ouija - Reincarnation
Uncreation - The Heretic

Mysticum

Planet Satan

Photo: Fotofunke

Mysticum, finally back from their hidingplace! Long ago their debut album "Streams of Inferno" was released, what has happened since? We thought it was time to find out and hooked up with Mean Malmberg to get a closer encounter with the trio and finally find out when we can expect their eagerly awaited follow up album with the brilliant title "Planet Satan". Did he want to talk to us? Find out on the lines below!

By Tex Silver

What is happening with Mysticum at the moment?

-"We have basically been standing still because of the sampler we bought. It was so advanced so no matter what we did on it, it sounded good, and then a couple of weeks went by and it sounded shit, you know what I mean! It has basically taken two years so now we can use it as a drummachine, to really use the sounds properly. Now we know what we are doing so we have started to get things rolling. It really works, it's not like we make one song and then wait a bit more, that's not how it is. We made one song during three days, and that is our third song. We used one year for the first song, the second one took three months and now the newest one took three days."

It's been very long since your debut album was released, have you just relaxed?

-"Yeah we have, but it is also because of the sampler, but of course we could have done things a bit sooner. We haven't really stressed too much about it, rather been out and met people, to say it that way. Getting contacts instead, but now we are on top of things so we are ready to get things moving. We don't like to press out albums just to release something, we should love it otherwise we could just throw it away."

Judging by the three new songs you have made, will it be in the same track as "Streams of Inferno"?

-"Yes it is. The guitars are perhaps similar, the sound is quite similar in our rehearsal place as it was with the first album. But the drums are much more mighty and faster, or maybe not faster, we don't play faster but there are a lot more sounds. Two of the songs…we will have different drumsounds on each song but we have five bassdrums on the two last songs we have made. Four bassdrums like from a normal drumset and then one Hardcore Techno bassdrum. That's for these two songs, while the first song we made the bassdrum isn't present. The bassdrums are floating in the background, when we are playing it feels like we are floating, that we are standing on top of the drums so to speak. We have also sampled quite a few industrial sounds ourselves, we sample as much of what we use as possible. We have sampled stuff from the train and at industrial workingplaces and such. We are satisfied with that."

It is still the three of you in the band?

-"Yeah, still the three of us. If it isn't the three of us, it isn't Mysticum any longer, then it's over. That is our rule."

Will Full Moon also release the new album?

-"We haven't signed a contract yet but we are talking about it. We don't really think about that this label isn't really big, I don't really know enough to say something about that, but the person in itself is fantastic and then we want to cooperate with him. We have really good contact with him and it would be cool to continue with that."

You also had an offer from Osmose, why didn't you sign with them?

-"The first thing was that we weren't prepared and I think they were ready for a release immediately, or in half a year or something. It was too early since we hadn't prepared to do anything. And also we got 1.5$ for the first album and now we got something like 3FF, which is nothing and that sucks. We don't really count on selling 5 million albums either haha, so it could be cool to get a little bit more money for the few sold records."

"Planet Satan" is still the albumtitle?

-"Yes, it is! It fits perfect! It is a little about what I think about, a little bit above the World and looking down and looking around. Have an open mind."

Is it a description of the World today?

-"It could be a description, we aren't totally sure about that yet. It differs between the three of us. I am not sure if I want to call it the World, it could fit but it isn't…well actually, maybe it could be here since we know it. I haven't really thought much about where it is really, it is a concept and a picture of how it can look. Just the name can tell so much about what one can see, to me I think about another planet where the surroundings are like in Hell the way one could imagine, perhaps. All kinds of Hell, on one planet. Uniforms and Planet Satan's own military force, their style and all of that which is one thing, and all of those things fit into what we are doing as well."

When do you picture that you will record this new album?

-"I hope to do it the sixth of June at six o'clock, 1999. Maybe not to record it by then but all the songs should be finished by that time. I think we will record it late June or during July."

How will the visual aspect of the CD be?

-"The cover will be the classic Devil figure sitting with his feet crossed making the Devil's sign. He is sitting on a mushroom and all of this is in the universe and his stumach is in the middle to say it like that and it is like psychedelic colours. You know the effect when it sort of goes around, it is that kind of effect, it seems like the Devil is coming out of the cover. This is how it looks now but in the end it will look like a painting. We will have the lyrics on the CD, and have been thinking about having the numbers on the songs and with song number six it will just say number 6, and perhaps with our next album it will be number 6 and also with the third album, so in the end it will be 666. We should have done that on the first album though! We are actually going to re-press the first one and we have always said that we haven't been satisfied with the layout, so we have decided to do it over again and then we have the chance to use number 6, if it is correct to do it then."

One could perhaps say that the more Industrial style is more frequent now in the Metal genre than it was when you released your album. Have you been paying attention to the musical developments in this area?

-"It's the Industrial times now! Yeah, I have but I am not sure what one can call Industrial music but I can explain what I mean and what I have listened to. A band called Seawolves from Germany, it is really slow, I like slow music, the total opposite of Mysticum, and it is really slow. I don't like the typical Industrial machine type, some of it but it is not something I listen to. I have followed a bit more like the style of When, it is resembling to Seawolves but it is a lot rawer and more mighty. Deathprod., that type of music is something I really like, it is that style of music I have gotten into and what I have been listening to the most. I made a lot of that style when I got the sampler, made a lot of that type of music and played it live on the sampler just to play with the machine and then I hear it on a record one year later hehe. We made this type of music which we called slapp (Norwegian word, kind of similar to relaxed - ed) because it was so slow, it is music to flush yourself straight down the toilet. I like to be pushed down by the music, not pushed forward but downwards."

• ***Who is making the music in Mysticum now?***

-"We could say all three of us but I put the music together. Me and Ravn are involved in most of it and I program the drums to adjust. When I program the drums I put the beats after eachother and I control when the riffs should appear and how many times they should be repeated, that's what I do. The others are playing and listening to me as well as writing lyrics."

Are the lyrics also similar to the music?

-"Yeah, Zerastes is perhaps a bit more into the Industrial style as well as me, while Ravn is more close to the forest or how we can call it. We still think the same way, we are different in one way but at the same time equally the same in a different way. That makes us three. That is our image, to be three!" ■

Photo: Fotofunke

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Immortal

A great era is over. Immortal has in many ways been reborn. Gone is their classic logo, gone are the bandpictures on their covers, gone are the incredibly aggressive music. But I still think Immortal is a great band, even though their new album "At the Heart of Winter" in my opinion is their least good album to date. It still has its qualities and it still sound Immortal, but it doesn't quite feel the same though. So what have happened really? Abbath informed us about that and some other things as well.

By Melankol

-"There is a lot of work and struggle behind this album, so it is great to have it out. It has been a long time to wait for Demonaz as well and nothing happened there and then we had to do this tour and I had to do the guitars myself, we had Ares from Aeturnus on bass and this tour happened basically while I was doing the new songs, but we had to make this tour. I am glad we did it as well because it was a bit of money in the picture plus that I got really good routines on the guitar. We have worked a lot with the album after the tour, and it has worked really well. It has just been me and Horgh who have done this album, and we are really pleased with the result. It was really okay to work in Abyss too, and I feel that we have developed quite well on the new album."

Is it you and Horgh that is the basis in the band?

-"Well, now we have also gotten a new bassist, Iscaria (spelling may be wrong-ed). He's coming from a band called Enchanted, and he is doing a very good job and he does his things, so now we are a permanent line-up. It is better than it has been for a long time, to put it like that! Ares was just a session bassist untill we found a permanent one. I would rather want a new guitarist, but we can't find a guitarist that is specialized in this style, so we found out that we had to do this ourselves. I am the one that is making the music, so it is working out fine."

Is it a bit strange not to have Demonaz in the band anymore?

-"Such a long time has passed by so I am used to it and there's no problems with it. It was a bit strange to do the last tour without him. It was a bit strange to have a completely new band which I hadn't played live with before. I hadn't played live with either Ares or Horgh before, and I had never played live with guitar before either, that was spaced, but now I don't think about it anymore."

If I understand it correctly, you were kind of going in different musical directions with Demonaz as well!

-"The music he is doing now is not Metal at all. He got really into Fields of the Nephilim style, and I think that lead to us going quite a bit in different directions musically speaking. He wanted to go in a different direction than me. When we did "Blizzard Beasts" we didn't manage to make it work the same way as we had before. Then we started to work together with the new album and putting together various arrangements, and then he was still part of it and both of us agreed with the direction I took with the new material, but we understood that he wouldn't get back to the level he had, so we let him go and he went his own direction, so I put together the whole album by myself. It is also I that have made most of the music up through the years, so our style is there, it is totally the Immortal style but it has been a bit of changes in the techniques. In addition, me and Horgh have a very good dialog when it comes to putting the songs together. I feel that we are much more professional now than we have been in the past. I feel that our newer audience and our older audience will get a lot easier insight in our music on the new album. I feel that we have opened up more now than we have done earlier. Things are a lot clearer and more marked, and we have also worked with studio machines when we have put this album together, and gotten a lot easier insight when we have made the songs. This results in that parts of the arrangements are lasting longer, and we have felt that this is such catchy stuff that we can let the songs last a bit longer."

But he is still writing the lyrics, right!?

-"Yeah, now I had quite a few suggestions to the lyrics for the songs. It has always been him that has been the expert with the lyrics, so I still don't want to get into that just yet. I am working on it but he is very good to these kind of things. I presented the material and songs to him plus some ideas regarding the content in the lyrics and he got really inspired, and I thought that what he came up with was really good and choose to use it."

But do you think you will continue having Demonaz writing the lyrics for Immortal?

-"I am working really hard to create the best possible lyrics myself, but I will cooperate with him in the future, and I have another guy who I can work with a bit a well. An English man called Simon Duncaster who has actually also worked a bit with us earlier as well. He assisted us a little bit on "Battles in the North" and also on "Blizzard Beasts", but not on the new album. He has a lot of really good things as well, many good ideas, and since he is from England it is of a great help. I will be doing as much as possible myself but I think I will need some assistance here and there since I want to have it as good as possible."

There has been some changes in Immortal visually speaking. First you have changed your logo.

-"Just basically to have a clearer logo. We still use the old logo but not on frontcovers and such. We just felt that we wanted an easily readable logo. A lot of the people that aren't well known with our band and our logo don't understand what our old logo said before we tell them. It is also a new era for the band, and in that aspect we thought we could also change the logo. It was just something we felt like doing."

How did you reach the decision that the logo should look like this?

-"It was actually Herve at Osmose who sent us a suggestion, and we thought it was a good suggestion. There are some divided opinions about that logo, but we think the logo is good and that is the most important thing."

It is also a new coverconcept this time. You have always had a bandpicture on the cover up till the new album. Why did you decide to have a drawing this time?

-"It was just me and Horgh and we didn't want to portray ourselves as a duo one more time. We wanted that to be especially for the "Battles in the North" album, and we didn't want to do that one more time, plus that we are in a new era. Demonaz isn't part of us anymore and we felt that this was a new start for Immortal and the whole concept is more open this time around. Then we got the offer from Osmose to use a professional French painter to do the cover, and I sent suggestions down to them and then he sent back a sketch of how it would be, and I thought it looked really good. I told him to continue with it and got the finished result and I was really satisfied with it. It is perfect, and it really tells about the whole concept and the whole vision is just perfect. I took a chance there, and I have to say it turned out much better than what I thought."

Could you tell a bit about the background for the cover?

-"It is a fortress in a canyon, it is like beyond the North, it is the center for the demon world we write about. It is a clean vision, a fantasy world, an evil fantasy demon world which is placed beyond the heights of the North, this is what we call Blashyrkh. A total fantasy concept. That is the concept which we have been writing about for quite a long time."

Musically speaking you have also taken a step. I feel that the riff structure is a bit different.

-"It has a lot to say with that I have taken over the guitar and I have a different style than what Demonaz had, and I thought it was also important to improve the riff technic to get a better production to it as well. It has just turned out that way. I try to do it as professional as possible and at the same time develope myself but also have a lot of oldtimer roots in the style, and I feel I have done that quite well. It is a quite particular type of riff, but I feel that there is a new drive in a way."

I also feel that much of the aggression that was present on the earlier Immortal albums have been put in the background.

-"We have flattened it out a bit, made the perspective a lot wider. The entire album is as a whole inspired by the best from our style, we have brought that with us and used it as an inspiration source for this album, and I also felt that when I made the album I wanted it to be a bit more varied style. Not so oneway as earlier, as for example "Blizzard Beasts", that we would get a bit more melancholy into it, a bit more feeling and more bottom. Also to make the music a bit more interesting for more people, for the old fans as well as the new fans. We felt it was about time to improve ourselves within most areas."

Do you see this new album as the first step in a new musical development for Immortal?

-"It is an improvement of our style. Our style is so good and we felt that we could do our style better and more professional, and I feel that we have succeeded in fairly well. We have done this for so many years now so it was about time we took a long step."

Do you think it will be in a more aggressive direction or more atmospheric?

-"Both actually! It will be a good mixture, a perfect mix. We will probably be squeezing it a bit more together, I don't know if we will be writing so long songs on the next album. We are already doing two new songs and they are in the same genre but shorter songs and a bit more intense, but at the same time it is very much varied. "At the Heart of Winter" just turned out that way. I felt that I wanted to take a significant step from "Blizzard Beasts". I thought it was about time that people would opened their eyes for our band and our style, because we have such a unique style that it was about time that we emphasized our style to such a degree that more people would get interest in our style and get more into it."

Do you feel that Immortal is thinking in another way musically speaking than what you have done earlier?

-"I would say that we have gone back a bit to the earlier stages, that we are going back a bit, and that we have found back to the old spirit that we had in the past. I felt that we stressed a bit with "Blizzard Beasts", and I have opened myself a lot more. I am not so one-dimentional in my thinking anymore as I was with "Blizzard Beasts". I have a lot wider perspective with our style than what we had a couple of years ago. It is a bit back to the old days, we have become a bit more old fashioned again, and that is also what we like best as well. But with "Blizzard Beast", it became a bit too much Morbid Angel influenced. We stressed a bit with that melancholy and the atmosphere which the Immortal style originally is about. Though "Mountains of Might" is an exception."

How was it for Immortal to work in Abyss?

-"Really great, and Peter is a really great guy. He had a great understanding for what we wanted. We recorded a demo with all the songs before we went down there so that he could listen to what we wanted and how the songs were, before we started the recording. We experimented a bit in the beginning to find the right production, and itwent really fast, because he had a great understanding for what I wanted. We worked separately, Horgh worked by himself and recorded the drums separately, and I recorded my stuff afterwards, and it worked out really well. But it was really boring living down there and staying there, it is far out in the countryside, but it was really great working in his studio, and we worked really strict. We worked from 09.00 to 18.00 every day, and we booked the studio for a month and we were finished after less than twenty days."

Do you have any more thoughts around the possible live album from Immortal?

-"We will try to do some takes now with the tours ahead. We will head out on a tour for twenty dates now and we will try to do a take then, and then we will see if we perhaps can do something on the festivals we will be playing. We will try at first and then we will see what it ends up with. The festivals we will be playing this year are Wacken, With Full Force and then we will play a Greek festival in September. I also think there are a couple of more festivals, but I don't have the information here and I can't remember it for sure either."

It seems like Immortal has been a very visionary band. Do you think long ahead in time when you make new plans?

-"No, we have completely stopped doing that, because the only thing that happens is that the disappointments become bigger. We try to plan things in as short of time as possible, we try to exist a bit more in the present and not to make any big plans. It is not seldom I have been disappointed with tours getting cancelled and one thing after the other. We try to take it a bit more calm and not think to far into the future."

You were supposed to do another "Sons of Northern Darkness" tour, part 2, with Marduk!

-"We discussed this with Marduk when we played these festival dates on our last tour. They are in the studio now and recording their "Panzer Division Marduk" album so we won't do anything with them in the near future. But a new Sons of Northern Darkness tour is very likely to take place but it won't happen in the very near future. It is really great to tour with Marduk, really great people and we get along with them really well. Perhaps the most successfull tour we have had was the one with Marduk in 1994."

The tour that is just around the corner was supposed to also have featured Vital Remains!

-"Yeah, they were supposed to play support, but they were not able to take part on the tour due to work in the studio."

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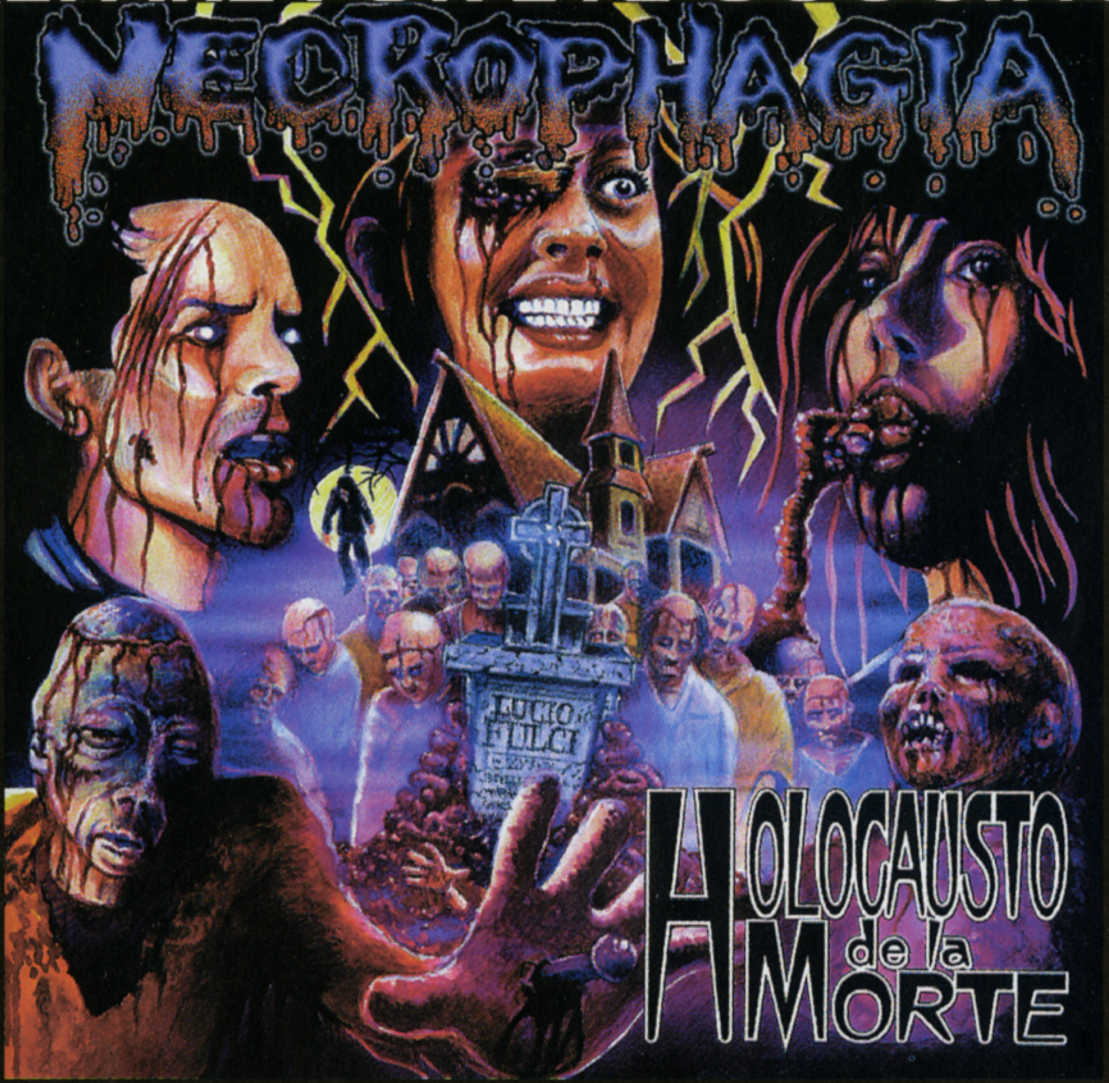
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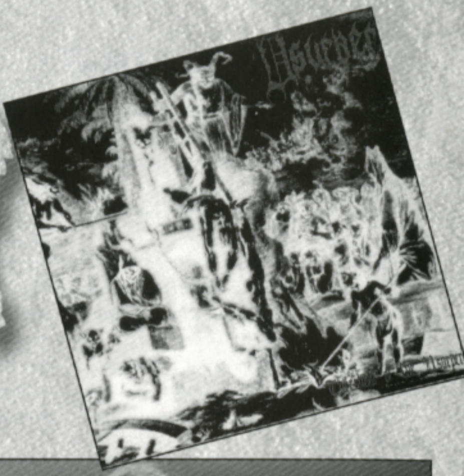
A New Season



With "Skeletal Season", the newest offering from Chicago's lurking Metal band Usurper, they have really come up with something traditional but at the same time clearly unique. It shines with obscurity and what else is magnificent? Great Metal, originality and a dose of killer riffs are enough to keep me busy during night. Rick Scythe was on the other line from the land of sinz, and instead of keeping silent, we shared a few words together.

By Melankol

What's going on in Chicago?
-"Not much really! It's pretty dull out here, we have just been rehearsing and that's about it you know!

What kind of town is it really?
-"It's a pretty big city, you have a lot of black people here, you got a lot of pretty much everybody. It's your typical urban American city. We kind of keep to ourselves, we have a loft that we rehearse in and we pretty much hang out down there. I mean, you could find any kind of scene going on in the city, we just basically don't really hang out with anyone or do anything like that. We're pretty isolated actually, we try to be anyway."

Isn't there a lot of Metal bands there?
-"Yeah, there's a lot of bands out here but not really too many cool places to play. It's a lot of bars out here and promoters that make you buy tickets to sell to your friends to play shows so we basically don't even play out around here."

You were on the tour with Dark Funeral that was supposed to go through most of America. Is there really a market for these type of bands to play that many shows in America?
-"It is kind of coming around. The States was basically this typical Florida style Death Metal and a lot of the kids are mainly into that and a band like Usurper, especially a few years ago, it was hard for us to play out that much. A lot of people didn't understand where we were coming from but it seems to be coming around a lot now lately. A lot of the kids in the States are discovering Black Metal and they are discovering Power Metal and all that kind of stuff, it's both good and bad. When we play out we appeal to, I think, a slightly older crowd, a lot of the kids don't really understand what we are all about right now."

It has taken America quite a few years to discover Black Metal, and when Black Metal started to become common and shallow, that's when America opened its eyes!
-"That's exactly it! America seems to be behind the times, it's like where Europe was at like six years ago the States are just at. Little sixteen year old kids goes to shows wearing bad corpse paint and capes and stuff, they are trying to out-evil eachother and it's pretty stupid. For us it is pretty laughable, we are all older and we are in our late twenties, it is kind of funny to us when we go to these kind of shows and see the kids that are about six years behind the times."

Do you think the older style of Black Metal could become popular in the States or will it be this kind of keyboard type of Black Metal?
-"It is getting to be more of that, more of the modern style Black Metal. A band like Usurper doesn't really fit in with that and we don't really fit in with the Death Metal scene. We're kind of an obscure band you could say in the States. We're starting to kind of get known but I think for a lot of Americans we are still a real obscure, underground band."

From what areas of the World do you get the most response from?
-"We did a small European tour and that kind of helped us to see where our fan base is, but mainly we get letters from German and Holland, even from Austria. Central Europe seems to be a bigger market for us right now. A band like Usurper is still relatively new to a lot of people, just with Necropolis pushing the new album I think it's getting a little more exposed but even before that I think you really had to be diehard into the underground to really understand where Usurper was coming from. A lot of the kids weren't able to buy our albums in stores and things like that, that's the way we look at it, that we are very underground."

Yeah, you've been very underground uptill now. Also with the release on Head Not Found, it was more for like the underground masses than for people buying music in shops!
-"Absolutely. For us Head Not Found was great because we just got done with our demo in '94 and then we had interest from Metalion as well as some other labels. They were all smaller and that was kind of what we wanted to do at first to release our first full-length album on a small label but at the same time with a reputable label, not like a kid in his basement that didn't know what he was doing. We thought it was a good opportunity because it would still be underground and we could still do a lot of promotion ourselves. Diabolical Slaughter, our vocalist, handles all the mail and all that kind of stuff and he's been doing that since '94 so we built up like...as far as underground fans we built up kind of a strong following with that. It is just kind of the mainstream kids that go to shows and don't really read fanzines and things like that, that we are just starting to be exposed to right now. When we put out our demo in '94, not too many people were doing our style of Metal, especially from the States. We didn't really know how it was going to go over. We basically pressed it up in 600 copies to start with and we got rid of those within a month. We stopped pressing them up when we hit 1300 copies, officially pressed, and we know there's some small label in Brazil that has been bootlegging it and selling it down there. We get letters from a lot of different people around the World that say they got a copy of our demo from some distro that we never even heard of. It is still kind of out there, I guess."

Do you look upon it as a compliment that it has been bootlegged?
-"Yeah, you know, it is not something we get bitter about or get mad about. The way we look at it, it's cool that five years later people are still interested enough to actually bootleg it and make new pressings of it. With us, we just decided that we were gonna re-release it on CD because it's hard to really

keep track of people who got it and they might get like a really bad copy of it, or something like that. We just figured to do it right and it is really strange, we still get people asking for it that write us. We figured that we are probably going to put that out with Necropolis along with some bonus tracks that we recorded over the years that never got released."

The first tour I heard about involving Usurper was this American tour with Dark Funeral. What kind of experiences did you get from that tour?

-"It would have been great if the promotion was done right. Unfortunately we had a lot of people that weren't really looking out for the bands, they were looking out for themselves. There's this guy Odin from Moribund Records, he was basically setting up the tour and it was supposed to be twenty eight dates and he was supposed to get transportation and it was supposed to be Dark Funeral, Destroyer 666, Usurper and Acheron touring. This guy Odin got a lot of the money from advance and this booking company was a complete total rip off. Their name was KGB Booking and what they did was basically collect a lof of money from these clubs and then they kept it and then they blamed it on the bands. We read shit on the internet saying that we ripped off people and it was them saying it, just a bunch of bullshit. So basically Dark Funeral was out in Chicago for Expo of the Extreme which is this big festival going on in Chicago. It was supposed to be the beginning of the tour, now this guy Odin from Moribund told us that Acheron broke up, which was total bullshit. He just wanted to bail out of the tour, so Dark Funeral was here and there were no transportation, half the tour money was stolen by KGB and shit like that. Basically we were stuck, we were ready to go but we knew it was kind of falling apart. Basically Necropolis and Metal Blade, which is Dark Funeral's company in the States, kind of stepped in and salvaged what they could which only turned out to be five shows. Some of them were decent, the actual show experiences were good, a few of the places we played the draw wasn't the biggest, but the actual show seemed to go smooth. But getting there and the transportation was pretty rough. Both bands made the best of it and we did what we could. All we really wanted was to tour as much as possible. Unfortunately there is too many people in the scene today that seem to care about money and care about their own personal profit instead of seeing something like that happening which would have been really cool."

Who was playing session drums for you on that tour?

-"This guy whose name was Von Chaos, he was just this guy who was a big fan of the band. He wrote to us, he lived in Michigan, which is another state kind of by Illinois. He was just somebody that wrote the band and was a big fan and our original drummer didn't never want to tour or anything, he wanted to be this studio drummer which we respected. But once we signed with Necropolis we wanted to go the next step and tour, so we got this guy Von Chaos and he was an okay drummer, not the greatest, but we didn't get along with him on a personal level and for us it is really important. We are not one of these bands that hang out in the scene and try to be friends with a lot of the bands. We kind of keep to ourselves a lot, so when you are with somebody like that on tour and you can't really see eye to eye with him on music and things like that, we just couldn't handle him. We just decided to get rid of him so we got rid of him and then Dave Hellstorm, he used to play drums in a band called Funeral Nation joined, it just happened. We got back from the tour, we kicked out that session drummer and Dave really liked our style a lot and he wasn't really doing anything. He was kind of jamming in this other Death Metal band but wasn't really happy with that, and they weren't really doing anything. He wanted to tour and he has toured before and everything and he was just professional and likeminded with us. It was a real strong bond between us, so it worked out good from there."

You also did a small European tour with Enthroned and Hecate Enthroned. How did that work?

-"That went a lot better. In Europe things are run a lot different. We are telling Enthroned and Hecate Enthroned about how it is in the states and they nearly couldn't believe it. In Europe you have the big tourbus and they treat underground bands with a lot more respect. In the States, the bands are setting up the shows and the bands have to book hotelrooms and the band are on their own for food, it is really a different experience. It is much more professional in Europe and it was great to finally getting there for us and just getting to meet people that have been writing the band for years, and also knocking some new heads around that probably aren't that familiar with Usurper yet. And the guys in Enthroned are totally great guys, and basically in the bus every night it was drinking and watching old Metal videos and talking about old Metal. They are more our age and we had a good mindset with them, they turned out to be really good friends of ours. Nobody on the bus, even Hecate Enthroned, noone had this rockstar attitude, this bullshit attitude that we kind of see lately with some of the younger bands that don't really understand. That's not what underground Metal is about, back in the mid 80's bands like Mötley Crue and fucking Bon Jovi and crap like that had this rockstar attitude. Bands that were underground seemed more united, they were more dirtbags, uniting as one, just knock some heads on stage. That is basically the atmosphere that was between the three bands. All three bands were musically a lot different from eachother but on a personal level it worked a lot better."

Did it bother you that these two other bands have no credibility at all while you certainly have?

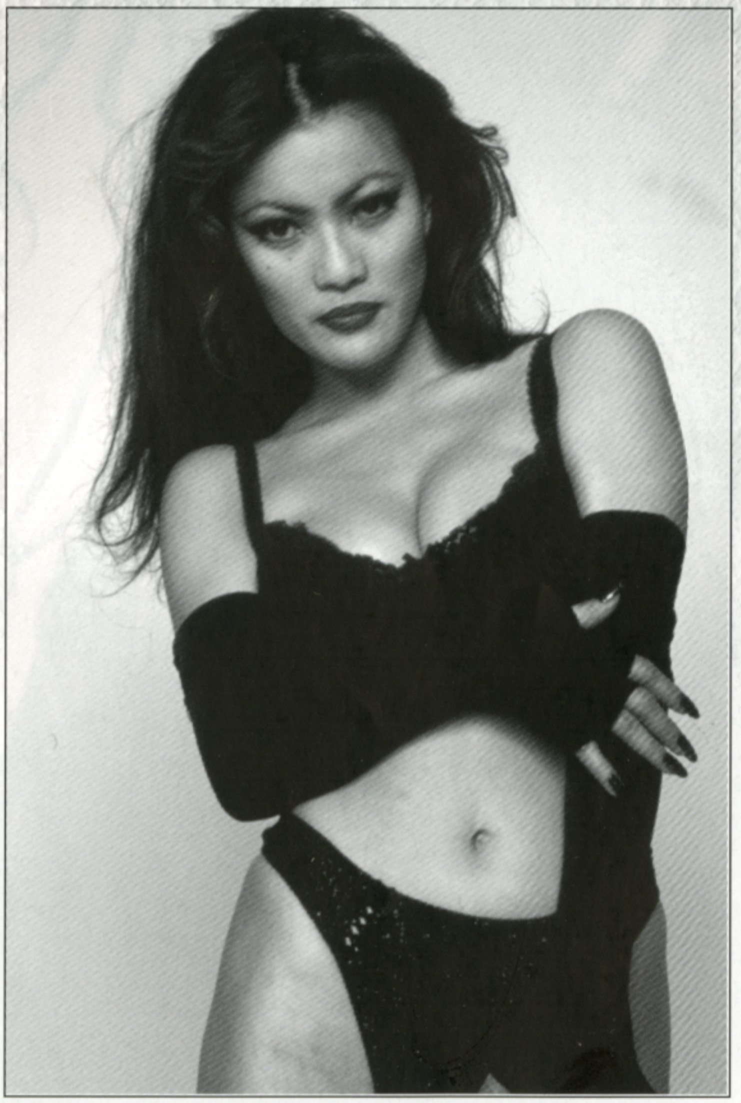
-"No, we don't really think about stuff like that. Usurper have always basically kept to ourselves and any kind of credibility we get, we are glad for it but even if nobody was into us or people don't like us or whatever the case is, we don't care. We don't care about getting bad reviews, we don't care about any of that bullshit. We record albums for ourselves and when we go on tour we play for people who want to see us, and it's

Continues on page 34

Sex & Satan

Sex & Satan

Welcome to the first chapter of Sex & Satan. These pages will be Diva Demona's domain and I hope you will enjoy what you see. Feel free to let your minds fly away into the landscape of sin, but since she is the master here, I will let her introduce herself for you without further words.



y name is Diva Demona, and I am going to be your host within these pages of Sex & Satan, to fulfill your dreams and desires. I have one wish though, that you could write me and let me know how you want me to look. I have given you some tastes of me now, but what I want is for you to transform me in your imagination. Whether you want me to pose as a little girl, a queen from ancient times, a bimbo with a colourful wig, maybe a mermaid from Hell or simply naked. Only your imaginations are setting the limits.

I fully trust you to be tastefull and artistic, so now it's up to you to be creative and tell me what you would like to see, and I will do what I can to fulfill your secret desires.
I am looking forward to reading your letters.

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cool, I guess I take it as a compliment that you'd say something like that, but as far as the other bands, it's nothing that concerns us. It turned out good to our favour that they were people that we got along with. To us that is much more important to be able to listen to old Metal and drink and stuff like that with someone and to be on the right mindframe than to be on a bus with a bunch of rockstars that maybe are more credible but you don't see eye to eye with them."

Have you played at the Milwaukee Metal Fest?

-"Yeah, we played last year and it went cool. Again it was one of these things were we had a good slot, it is three stages that are run almost simultaneously so you are always in competition with someone. Originally we were slotted to not really have too much competition, like there was a lot of dead space on thestages, but with cancellations and shit like that we ended up going against Death. We basically had a few hundred people watching us, were they had a few thousand, but at least the people watching us were a hundred percent into Usurper and quite honestly I have respect for Death as musicians and everything like that. They are talented, no-one is taking that away, but god dammit, they had to be one of the fucking boringest live bands I have ever seen in my fucking life."

Yeah, talking about credibility, they have lost all their credibility!

-"Exactly, I can respect somebody on a musician level for being talented and stuff like that, but they don't do anything for me to make me bang my head. And if I can't bang my head I don't really consider it total Heavy Metal. To watch like four guys that are standing up and playing their instruments, looking really bored, isn't my idea of a good Metal concert. When I grew up, any kind of band I saw kicked my ass live, it was a magical experience. To me watching Death is like, it should come with a pillow or something!"

Are you going to do any kind of European tour this year in support of your album?

-"There's talk of it, but with us we have had so much bad luck with tours and stuff. I'm not going to believe it 'till I'm there. Like even when we went to Europe this time, we had tickets in our hands two other times to go and for whatever reasons it didn't happen. I think the main reason it didn't happen before was that it was supposed to be a Necropolis package and a lot of the Necropolis bands are just side projects and things like that, and they couldn't really get it together to do a live tour which was a shame. To me playing live is where it's at. It was kind of a let down that time, but there has been talks and Necropolis is doing a lot to get us on tours and trying to get us on these festivals, but they are not a booking agency obviously, so things are bound to fall through. I am hoping we get to go there again and do some real big shows because the European tour we did with Enthroned was definitely an underground tour. There wasn't more that 300 people there on the biggest night, so our goal would be to support someone a lot bigger than us, to play in front of a larger audience. If that larger audience could understand what we're about or not, I don't know. But it is something we want to do."

How did you get in touch with Necropolis Records?

-""Diabolosis" came out on Head Not Found and then at that time Metalion took off to Australia on some vacation which is cool and everything, but we were supposed to put out…basically the "Threshold of the Usurper" EP was compiled from a lot of songs that we recorded for 7 inches that fell through and everything. So Metalion said that he would press it up for us on CD and we thought it would be cool to atleast get them out. But he went on vacation for this long time and he gave us his address down there but we had a problem that we couldn't get in touch with him. In the meantime we began getting offers from other labels, and Necropolis was one of them, and for us it was nothing personal. We thought it was the next best move for the band. At the time Necropolis was kind of at our status, they were this underground label that was starting to get a good reputation and getting a lot of good promotion for their bands. Then we talked to Typhon and it just clicked. I mean, the guy is just hundred percent behind the band, and I saw eye to eye with him on a lot of things, on a personal level. To me that is extremely important. We had a real hard time with Voices of Wonder, to this day we do. Whenever it comes to royalty checks and things like that, we had to go to Europe and actually see a new pressing of "Diabolosis" and then come back and call them and kind of bust them on it. Because they were telling us "oh no, we stopped pressing it up because it wasn't selling". And then we saw a new pressing of it with a different colour and everything, and the guy from Damnation was telling us that they had sold out of our last one and that this was the third pressing of it, so then we had to call them and it just gets to be a bunch of bullshit having to deal with that. It is not the way it should be done, so Necropolis had a lot of things going and they were a US label. You got to have somebody on your side, not just looking to get money so that was a huge decision with us to go with them. We did get some other offers but we said fuck it, we rather want sign with a label like that, that is really going to push a band and being on a bigger label, we would only be a roster band."

And it also seems like you signed with them at the right time, because it seems like they are really growing!

-"Absolutely, and that was the thing! We were kind of at that stage too and we were just a small band trying to go to the next step, and they were kind of getting to the next step and it just seemed to work really well for us. And now they are obviously a lot bigger,

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and this is the first time our album is getting into a lot of stores and getting a lot of exposure and that's just something we've never had before. It has been working out good."

You've only had one line up change since you started out, when Apocalyptic Warlord left the band.

-"When we started in '92, it was just supposed to be a project. You got to realize, myself and Diabolical Slaughter were burnt out on the bands that were coming out and different albums. I was used to going to the store and picking up an album and loving it, picking up like "Bonded by Blood" and then pick up "Seven Churches" the next week, and it was really cool. And when we came to the early 90's, at least in the States, it wasn't like that. Everyone was kind of sounding the same so we basically decided to just say fuck it, to make our own music just for us to listen to and maybe give it to a few of our fucking looser friends out here, and it just kind of grew from there. But Apocalyptic Warlord he's really into the music, he is probably becoming a studio musician professionally, and that's what he want to do. We totally respect that and at the time when we got him for Usurper he was this amazing drummer and we figured that all we wanted to do was to play and record and stuff. But obviously things grew and we were just taking it as far as we could go with it, and it kind of cought on. We honestly didn't expect people to understand what we were getting at because we have a lot of the feel from mid 80's Thrash Metal and Death Metal, but it was definitely not typical and it didn't rip anything off, and we incorporated a lot of our own ideas that we just were into. I am just amazed that we got as far as we did actually, because we weren't trying to follow any certain band or scene like that. We were just playing instinctively what we wanted to hear. And since we now wanted to tour and everything, he was out of the picture."

What is the background for the name Usurper?

-"A lot of people say that it is obviously from Celtic Frost, the Usurper off "To Megatherion", and I guess in a way, probably subconsciously, it had something to do with it. It was just a powerful name at the time. We were trying to think of something to call the band and we just thought like, you hear the name Usurper like mentioned in Conan books or whatever and Frost had the song and we just thought it was such a powerful name and everything. It fits with a Metal band and we couldn't believe noone had used it, so we just decided to call it Usurper."

Talking a bit about your new album "Skeletal Season". How did the idea for the cover start?

-"This came out of a sketch that I came up with. Basically when Apocalyptic Warlord was still in the band, him, myself and Diabolical Slaughter was kind of hanging out talking and we figured for the new album, a lot of the songs that I was writing, we wanted to really accent the dark kind of dreary aspect of Usurper and base a lot of the lyrics on the paranormal things. Like ghost hauntings and unknown creatures and things like that. We wanted to delve more into that and it was just in our mindframe though. I came up with this sketch and I wanted it to look kind of stylized, I didn't want it to look like a photograph or something. I wanted it to look like an old album cover kind of, and I wanted it to be done in oilpaint, no airbrush and no computer generation. Just have a certain look to it and basically this guy from Finland, he sent us his portfolio a while back and we were looking for an artist and Necropolis suggested we use Petagno. I love the guy's artwork and he is phenomenal, but he has done so many albumcovers and Usurper is kind of a band that seems a little more unique, and I don't want it to come out and be the tenth album of the year that had the same artist drawing it. Basically, this guy that did it for us, he's done a few things for Black Mark I think, but he is not really well known and he hasn't done tons of albums. So I sent him a sketch and I told him how I wanted it to be done in oilpaint and no airbrush. He painted it and it just looked a lot like the sketch and it was what I had in my mind, so it turned out really good."

Regarding like Necrolord and Petagno, I can't think of a more boring promotional tool to promote and album with! Sure Petagno have made covers for Mötorhead albums, but who gives a fuck really!

-"Yeah, I guess I didn't want to say it that harsh but that's kind of what we felt, you know. We were talking and it is kind of like the same with Dan Seagrave in the early 90's. The guy is a great artist but when he is on every albumcover it just turns into this generic stamp of approval. The artist we used was more inspired to do the painting when I gave him the sketch, and we wanted someone that put a little more of their passion into it and we are definitely happy with it."

It is the same with these labels promoting their crap Black Metal bands as something in between Immortal and Emperor. Are people like going to be impressed by something as retarded as that? It's like treating the record buyers as if they would still be wearing diapers!

-"You are totally fucking right man! Here in the States, there are so many fucking pee-brained idiots out here that fall for that. We get a lot of these little ads in the mail and stuff, and we kind of have this kind of thing at our practice place called "the wall of shame", and we hang up like the stupidest ads and stupidest bands as we know, with photos on it just to laugh at and everything. I swear, I can't remember the name of the band, but there were some band from the States that was calling their style "true Norwegian Black Metal", and they were from the States hehe. And then it said "no trends" on it I think! That is about as trendy as you can get. I just think it is retarded and it just shows a

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WOLFHEART
„Cold Breath“

Med debutplaten "Cold Breath" fører Wolfheart stilen fra Sentenced-mesterverket "North From Here" videre. Gang på gang blir sansene bombardert med det ene det ene melodiske døds-metal mestrerverket etter det andre.

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certain retarded mentality. You are right, the labels should feel the most shame with that, trying to jump on a trend, we are totally against that!"

It was just the same in the early 90's with all these ads telling about the new crap bands who were sounding like Carnage or Dismember and all that. I just made the biggest y09awn I have ever made every time I saw that!

-"Hahahaha! Yeah, in the States it was like every band was compared to Cannibal Corpse or something and the original which somebody was being compared to, they might have done something great to achieve that comparison, but you don't sit there and try to mold your band after it to make some money. That is so retarded."

It's music for the retarded generation!

-"Hehe, there is no question about it."

You have titled your new album "Skeletal Season".

-"It is kind of like the time of the year when everything dies, around Halloween, the Pagans call it Samhain. The time of the year when everything dies, and for us it has a lot of personal meaning. Obviously you could read the lyrics and it talks about when it dies and the first verse mainly deals with the Pagan aspects, the history of it, and then it goes into certain verses like "acid hits, and razor blades" which is basically like kids in the States go trick or treating and certain people we know like to put razorblades in kid's apples and stuff like that. But basically, deeper it is more about the time when everything dies and you go out and you kind of unite as one with your friends. It's just the time of year when you go outside and you can just smell it in the air, a deathsmell in the air. It is just kind of brought together on the whole album, the feel of it. Everything deals with the paranormal and death, and there is like a lot of personal messages in there that probably noone understand but us."

Is there a huge difference in Chicago between Winter and Summer?

-"Oh yeah, absolutely! It's horrible in Chicago! Summers are unbearably hot and then Winter is freezing out here, and you don't really have Spring and Fall too much. It is almost like Summer one day and it turns into Winter over night. It is really bizarre, it is pretty harsh and extreme."

Regarding the lyrics on "Skeletal Season", I find them quite traditional but at the same time not that traditional. Is there something specific that inspire you and Diabolical Slaughter to write the lyrics you do?

-"Basically we read a lot about different things, like about real things that have happened which people might not believe in. Different kinds of creatures and things like that, hauntings and paranormal things. Creatures that are thought to be unknown or extinct, and it kind of inspire you when you sit around and me and Diabolical Slaughter discuss things, and it basically comes out of a lot of things that I read or something. We discuss it and try to take down our own aspect of it. Diabolical Slaughter tends to...his lyrics sometimes run into more of a fantasy realm where he'll base it off a reality and then expand on it and create like his own story. When I write lyrics, it's more directed were there is a definite topic that it's about and everything. Especially on the new album I'd say, in some aspect you are right, there is a lot of traditional sounding lyrics but then when you delve into it and find out what the story is about, the topics are a little more non-traditional. That is something that we are just interested in. We don't write about Horror movies and we don't write about stupid gore-type lyrics or whatever, it is all inspired off something."

I guess you have heard this a million times by now, but the structure in your music is pretty much similar to the structure in Celtic Frost. Does this come natural or is it done intentional?

-"Basically it just comes out that way. It is not really intentional, I mean, I guess I kind of take it as a compliment because to me Celtic Frost is as influential to Metal as Black Sabbath or something, and there is no denying it. Diabolical Slaughter's vocals do sound similar to Warrior's vocals in certain spots. I think on a face value, people can make that comparison a lot easier but I think the more you listen to Usurper and stuff, I mean, it turns into almost night and day. Both bands are doing so much different from eachother but I think that you are right in saying that a lot of people are making that comparison. That some of the structures and the way it is presented sometimes is similar to Frost. But there is a lot of different aspects too that we don't really get credit for."

You recorded the album in a studio called Eaton Records, how did that go?

-"It went great! We've been using this guy called Brian Eaton and he's an engineer out here, and he has his own studio and it's small. It's a hands on studio and he is very skilled, he's been doing this for almost twenty years, recording bands and things like that. He's done some big projects but it is more of the atmosphere we want. We don't want to go into a studio and have some big shot producer telling us how we should sound. We didn't ever want to have a generic soundquality, so it is more of a hands on approach to it, where we can do a lot of the production ourselves, and in the past we have always used a lot of digital things like triggers and things. With this album, we just wanted to go totally more on the organic approach where everything's analog, recording wise. There is some stuff that we did on this old 60's microphones that had like the tubes in them and things like that, and we wanted really to have the bassdrums to have more of a punch to it, where you feel it is hitting you in the chest. We wanted the guitars and bass to have a certain rumble to it, that made the speakers actually rumble and we just wanted to accent the heaviness of this album. We figured this was the heaviest Usurper album that we'd done to date, and along with the lyrics, we wanted it to really accent on the darkness, the heaviness of the band. More on the heavier side than we have before, we've always been known to have certain heaviness but it has always been more like traditional, I guess you could say. We did a lot of things with the production this time around that we didn't do in the past, with a lot of older analog equipment that really seems to capture more of a rumble."

Did you use any effects on the vocals?

-"No, not really! Occationally there is a lot of vocal tracks in certain places, and Diabolical Slaughter just tried a lot of different things. There was times when he would back off from the microphone and we used different microphones and things like that. Aside from basic reverb occationally and the real basic effects, those were the only ones we used. But he tried to recreate the vocaltones himself. Sometimes the microphone would be placed almost directly on his chest to get kind of a rumble to it. Obviously you could reduplicate these things going through a synthesizer and stuff, but we really wanted to create something. We really wanted to push that edge because we knew we could do it. We really get into it before we get into there and we are always thinking of ideas. The new album, we got about six songs musically that are done for it, and we have a lot of lyrical ideas so it is something that we are always thinking about. And when we go in the studio with Brian Eaton, he has a great ear for it and he knows how to give the right suggestions to what we want to approach. We did experiment a bit, but we feel that "Skeletal Season" is one of those albums you can listen to on a face value. You can listen to it and it just sounds like a Metal album, like real heavy Death Metal or Thrash Metal or whatever you want to call it. Or you can really sit down and analyze it and sit down and listen to each track deeply and you know there is a lot more things popping up.

You haven't used any kind of keyboards or synthesizers, do you feel that this destroy the Metal feeling in a band?

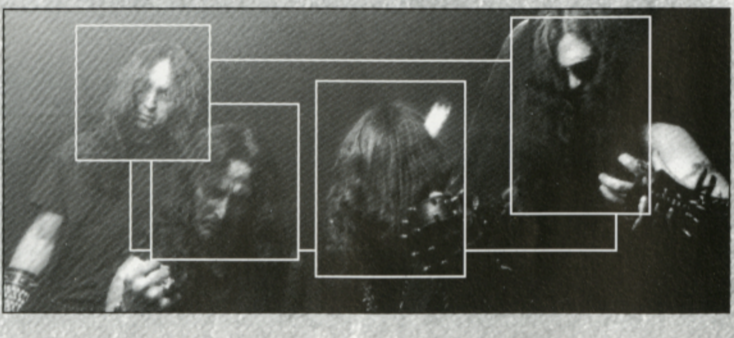
-"There's a few bands I think that know how to do it and know how to incorporate it right. But to me, I've never liked keyboard and all the bands I listened to growing up never had keyboards over the top, and it is something that I just never wanted to have in Usurper. I figured, we could still create atmosphere by using acoustics, by using different guitars that get strange feedback and I have this one guitar that almost sound like a piano in "Dismal Wings of Terror", and that is on guitar that I do it. It is like disharmonic tuning and it just has a strange style to it, so we are always looking for other instruments and ideas of things we could do to create certain atmosphere. I think there is always room for that in Metal, but some bands just get too flowery and weak sounding with the keyboard, to us it just doesn't sound Metal and after a while it sounds like a lot of little fairies dancing around or something. It is just not what we see as Metal."

Most of the music on "Skeletal Season" was made during '96 and '97, does that mean that you have a lot of new material ready?

-"Yeah, I got a lot of the music for our next album already written and myself and Diabolical Slaughter have a lot of the lyrical concepts at least, if not all the lyrics yet. This album took a lot longer to come out than we wanted, because of our drummer situation. Our former drummer Apocalyptic Warlord was a great drummer but this guy called Von Chaos that we got for the Dark Funeral tour, he wasn't at that caliber and he wasn't even that cool of a person, and we didn't want someone like that on this album. We were lucky to hook up with Dave because he's been in Funeral Nation and he has toured, he knows what it is about and we just knew we had to wait untill we got the right drummer. We weren't going to do it before that because with these songs, a lot of thought was put into them and how we wanted it to sound and everything, and we didn't want some idiot coming in and ruining it. So a lot of these songs are old and from now on, unless some other problem comes up, we are going to have a release out every year and hopefully catch up to some of the songs that we have got piling up, you know."

What can you tell us about your next release?

-"The next release is going to be real cool. It's going to have a lot of elements of everything that we have done in the past. It is going to have more of the aggressive edge of "Threshold of the Usurper", a little bit more of the precision edge. It is going to be the precision of that combined with the heaviness of "Skeletal Season". That is the best way I can describe the music. We are not going to go off in some weird direction, it is going to be a hundred percent Metal. Every song you could headbang to and probably even more than ever on this next album. It will probably be a little bit more of an instantaneous album, where there is still going to be a lot of debth to all the songs, and there is going to be a certain atmosphere created but probably not as much as on "Skeletal Season"."



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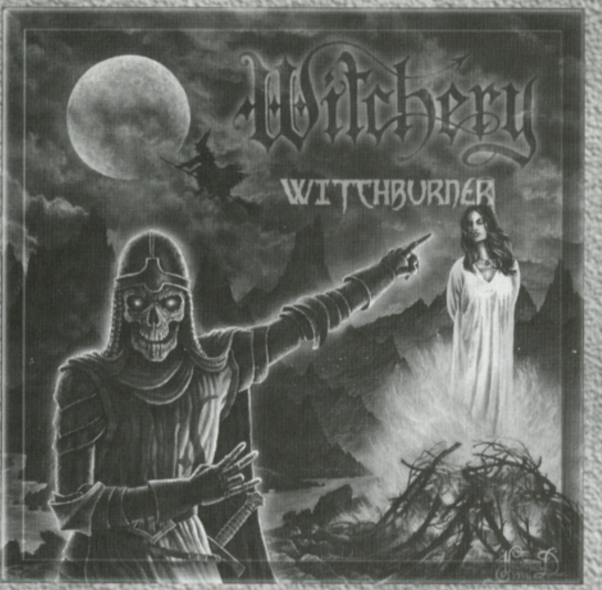
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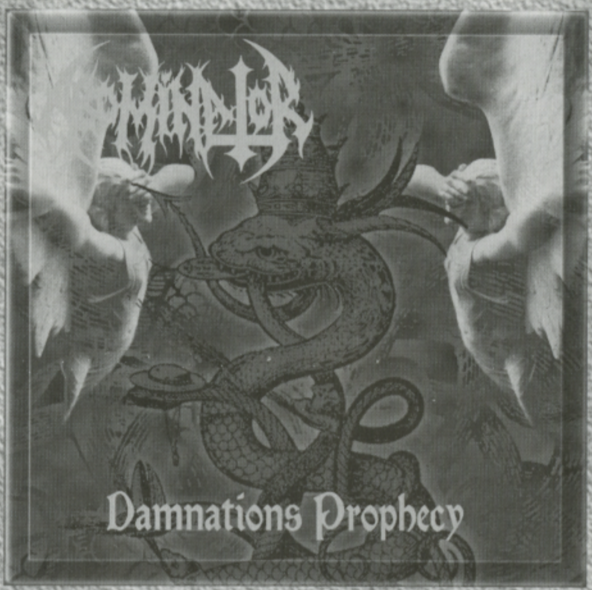
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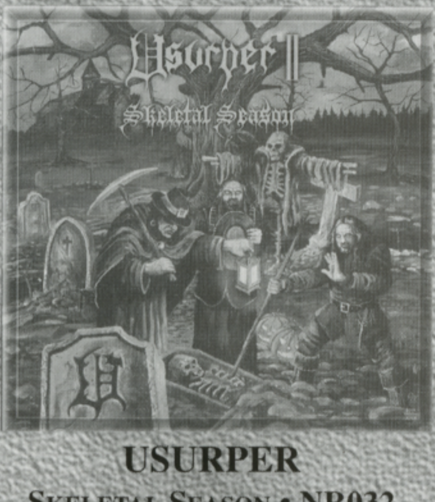
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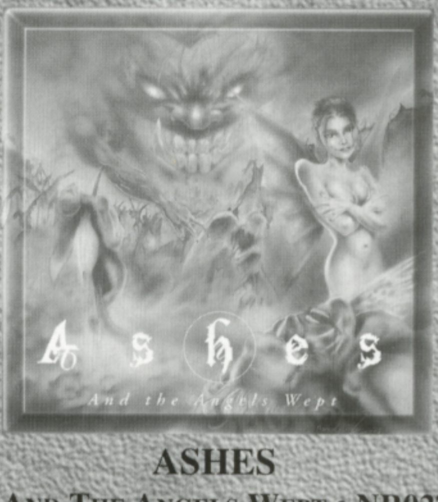
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Emperor

Photo: Morten Andersen

With the brilliant demo, mini-album and "In the Nightside Eclipse", Emperor established themselves as one of the premier bands arising from Norwegian Satanic soil. Their two latest albums have seen them drift into a new dimension, and likewise with Dimmu Borgir, it doesn't feel completely correct to label this as Black Metal anymore. But regardless, musical developments are always interesting to delve into, and Samoth took his time to answer our curiosity.

By Melankol

What is happening in the Emperor camp now?

-"At the moment we are rehearsing like crazy to get out on tour. We got a session bassist in December whom we have rehearsed with and he's basically into every song now. His name is Tyr and he doesn't have a background from any Black Metal bands, he has played in various technical Metal bands, and he's more into Cynic and the new Death and that kind of style. He is an extremely good bassist and it turned out quite easy since he could all the Emperor songs out of his own initiative, before he started rehearsing with us."

What was the background for Alver's departure?

-"We kind of demanded more from him than what he could give us, playing wise, and he has got a lot to do with his job and when Trym moved down here so that we could rehearse more often, then Alver just didn't have the possibility to rehearse as much as we wanted him to."

Do you think the basis of Emperor will be you, Ihsahn and Trym for the future?

-"Yeah, that is the plan now, but we don't know what will happen with our new bassist. It has worked out really good with him so far but we never know."

Has it also been a problem for Emperor, as it has been with Dimmu Borgir and Satyricon, that many musicians don't seem to want to play in a band full time and therefore have to be replaced?

-"Well, the thing with Alver, there you have this thing with economy, he had to choose his job. We have also had a lot of line up changes but in relation to that it has been due to arrests and various things, which have made it impossible for people to be a part of the band. But right now we look upon it as really nice to just be three people in the band, as long as we have serious and dedicated people, who are willing to give everything when we need it as session musicians. And Charmand Grimlock from Tartaros, he has been with us since the beginning of 1997, and he has done a really good job. He is a permanent session member to say it like that. Every time we are playing he is ready to join.The thing with Tchort was that he lived so far away that we almost lost contact for a while, when Faust was arrested then everything were floating in all directions for a while, then there were a lot of uncertainty about what would really happen. We didn't have a drummer and we didn't have the possibility to rehearse, and he lived in Kristiansand so we didn't see him. That cooperation kind of just drifted apart. And then Trym joined and we started to rehearse again, and we had known Alver for a while and he lived closer and was interested."

Without being diplomatic, who has been the most interesting person and musician to have in the band apart from you and Ihsahn?

-"I have to say that Faust was a very essential part of the band, so I have to say that he has been the one that has meant most to the band and had the biggest influence. He has been a part of the unity of Emperor. Now Trym has been with the band for such a long time, that he sort of has got the role that Faust had, Trym has got a very important role in the band now. I can't really picture that Faust will come back to the band now, and he doesn't have the possibility to do it either. He didn't write any lyrics or anything, but he was very much involved in the underground and very active pushing the band forward. Now lately he has also done a few interviews as Faust from Emperor, and even though he isn't a member of the band, he is still in a way a part of the unity of Emperor. He is following what we are doing, and we have a very good contact with him."

A little while ago, the Thorns vs. Emperor CD was released. What was the basic thought behind that from your side?

-"It was basically that me and S.W. Krupp discussed this when we were in jail, and I can't really remember exactly how things developed, but it was after Thorns signed with Moonfog that Satyr got to know about the idea, and wondered if we would complete the project and make a Thorns vs. Emperor CD. We had a meeting regarding this and discussed things back and forth, and then we just recorded it. The plan was that we were going to do something a bit out of the ordinary. The basic idea was that we would do a cover of a Thorns song and Thorns do an Emperor song, and the other material would be, at least for Emperor's part, it was important for us to do something a bit out of the ordinary from what one is used to hear from us."

The cover you choose to do of a Thorns song was "Ærie Descent". Why did you want to do this song?

-"It's not that many who have heard Thorns at all, but for those who have heard the "Trøndertun" tape, our idea was to do an aproximately similar version of the original "Ærie Descent", and Thorns' version had some changes so he would do the new version of the song himself. But we have also added a couple of things in our version which isn't on the original."

The track "I am", is this something the whole band have taken part in or is it only Ihsahn?

-"We have all been involved, Trym has also been involved here with some ideas but putting the song together has been done by Ihsahn. He has got the equipment and the studio knowledge, since it is recorded in his studio."

What side of Emperor do you feel comes forth on this CD?

-"I feel that the "Ærie Descent" track is a Thorns song but I still feel that one can hear that it is Emperor playing it, it sounds a bit Emperor. The other songs, that is really a brand new side. One can all through the songs recognize elements from the whole Emperor career really. We have samples from the demo stage all the way up to "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk", which is coming across in various spaced ways. The "Exördium" track is really an introduction to the whole CD, and "Thus March the Nightspirit" is just a classic version of "Thus Spake", and I personally think that "Opus A Satana", the classical version of "Inno a Satana" is more interesting than "Thus March the Nightspirit". But the production is better on this song, the classical production on "Opus a Satana" wasn't too good."

You seem to originally have been involved in the Eibon project together with Killjoy and Maniac. What is happening here?

-"Yeah, I got an inquiery from Killjoy, I met him when we were over in the States last Summer, but I haven't really gotten that much information about it. I just got an inquiery if that perhaps was something I could take part in. But I really have more than enough to do, and I don't make that much music either, so the music I make is firstly prioritated for Emperor and secondly for my own projects apart from Emperor."

So you think there's small chances for you to perhaps do something in this project then?

-"I haven't really been thinking about it anymore, and I haven't heard anything more about it either. I don't really know how far the project has come either."

If you would tell a bit about the difference in Emperor compared to the time around your first demo and uptill now, apart from the fact that you are older and more experienced with your instruments, what would you say is the difference with Emperor now?

-"It has a bit to do with the attitude. When I started Emperor in 1991, the intention was to make basic, oldschool Black Metal directly inspired by Bathory and Celtic Frost. Through the years we have gotten a more individual style, and we have become more open towards progression in our music. That is primarily the biggest difference, that we have found our way."

Does that also include the lyrics?

-"Yeah, on the demo and the mini album Mortiis did the lyrics. Especially on the demo the lyrics were written in a very primitive way just to have them primitive in the good old necro style, and that is not something we have on our two latest albums. The lyrics are more philosophical, intellectual lyrics. That is a major difference, but we could also at the early stage have written better lyrics, but we did it that way because it fitted in with the basic, oldschool Black Metal."

Do you miss the old magic from the earlier years?

-"Absolutely, but it is a lot in the things we are doing now that is very appealing, and that is the way I prefer it. But I have a lot of good memories from the older days, when you only played Metal to play Metal. Now a lot of other sides are coming into the picture with the business aspect and the whole package in addition to the joy of playing music. It becomes a job."

Do you feel that this interfers in a way with the joy of playing?

-"Sort of it does, either we want it or not. Just like now when we are doing interviews for the new album and that is just in the middle of rehearsals, and suddenly we have to do an interview when we originally were supposed to rehearse. Then we have to rehearse with four people when either Ihsahn or I am doing interviews. There are a lot of things that play a part in it all, but it comes along with it and we look upon it as a positive thing that we have reached a certain status and manage to sell records. If we only wanted to be a garage band and played Metal for the fun of it we could still have done that, but we have higher aims!"

What do you feel you have to sacrifice in order to be able to live off your music?

-"It is the part that we have to go out on tour, but for my part I don't look upon it as a sacrifice to go on tour, on Ihsahn's part that is a compromise he has to do since he rather had prefered if we didn't tour. Then we also have the interviews and press, that whole package, especially just before and after a new record which isn't the greatest thing. For my part, I don't look upon it as a big sacrifice as it comes hand in hand with the whole package"

Do you feel that Emperor has taken one step away from the Black Metal genre, or do you feel that you have brought the Black Metal genre one step further?

-"I really don't know. We have sort of taken the Black Metal genre further, but at the same time I would say that we have taken a step away. On the new album, it is more Metal influenced and at the same time more Death Metal, but it could at the same time be to take Black Metal one step further. That will have to be up to those who are to judge us, and what they want to say about that."

But do you feel that you still are a Black Metal band?

-"Yeah, we have never gone away from being a Black Metal band, but it is not that deadly important for us that we are Black Metal. We are not Black Metal in the pure essence, like Darkthrone, we are more open for other things and in the Black Metal scene, or at least how it used to be, then that was strictly forbidden. Then Black Metal was Black Metal, end of discussion. We have respect for that as well, but we have had a natural development and we have never thought in a way like that we have developed so much that we have to stop calling us Black Metal. You will find a lot of other things in the album than what one resemble to Black Metal. There are some that have called us Extreme Metal, because there are so many different style of Metal in the picture."

If we comparer you first demo and mini album to your new album, there is a very big musical development. Do you see that this development will continue in the same pattern as it has, moving closer to Metal?

-"I don't think we will go much further toward Metal now. I mean, we won't end up like Power Metal. I would say that the new album than "In the Nightside Eclipse", and also "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk". There are more aggressive themes on the new album, but it has become more technical and complex since the beginning. I also dare to say that we have become more aggressive, the new album is more brutal than what we have done earlier. I believe that we will continue to make really aggressive and brutal and extreme music but we are always open for new things, but the basis must always be there. We will never completely go away from what we are doing to something else, then we rather quite and do something else. The basis of Emperor will always be there. I would also say that whatever we have done up throug the years, it sounds like Emperor."

What would you say is the basis of Emperor?

-"I would say the basis is what people recognize from the start, the mini album and especially "In the Nightside Eclipse". That was when Emperor got an own individual style and started to make a name in the underground, we set a standard with that album. I think that is the album that people look upon as the essence of Emperor, and it is that album we build from."

You also categorize your music as "Sophisticated Black Metal Art"!

-"That is something we had on our last album, it is not something we have on the new album. It was something we used on "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk", and it was really to set an example for the musical standard a bit higher. The thing with sophisticated was more that we are musically more sophisticated, to say it like that. That we have talent because we got bored about the repeated stress about that Black Metal bands hardly needed to be able to play, it was just a statement to rise above the crap Black Metal."

You don't think it can sound a bit too pretentious?

-"Yeah, I can understand what you mean! But it was something we put on the album which we felt fitted in, it is not something we have on the new album and not a tag we have sticked to in any way."

When did you start to consider your music as art?

-"It was after "In the Nightside Eclipse" when we started to get more feedback on the music we made and that we understood that the music we made gave something to certain people and that people got inspiration from us. We also felt that we had managed to do more or less our own style. Then we choose to call it art to make it something else than just music, to make it is more an expression."

Do you understand that some people don't appreciate that much your musical development, and in that case, is this a signal you take seriously?

-"That is something we don't give a shit about! That is always happening whenever a band have a small change in their career, it is always someone that dislike that, and prefer that the band will remain as it was. I can understand that in many ways if I see it from a fan's standpoint. If you get into a band on a special album and that album really means a lot to you, and then a new album is released with a lot of new elements and then you would rather have prefered that they had continued in the same vein as on the previous album. But from a bands standpoint, like with us, as I said we have always been open for new elements and not make the same album over again. But then you have the opposite side again which think the new material is just as good as "In the Nightside Eclipse". We have gotten some new fans with "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk" so it opens it up a bit more for different parts."

I suppose quite a few labels have been interesting in signing you the recent years, but you have been loyal to Candlelight since your first release. Why have you choosen to stick with Candlelight?

-"First of all because we were tied with Candlelight with our contract. It was a period in time when things got to the top and we were around and discussed contracts with various companies but we were still on Candlelight for the contract we had and just before the last option was out, they opened that one as well. Then we didn't have a choice, but then we discussed things seriously with Candlelight and they kicked out Lee Barrett and he was the problem to all the misery. He didn't work in a professional way with that company at all, he just didn't give a fuck more or less and just let things happen. And with "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk", a lot of the work the company should have done was things I in the end had to do. But the album sold really well and we are not dissatisfied with the sales and we have always gotten our royalties from Candlelight and good royalties as well. That part has work out good but these things with advertising and the press haven't been good. But Plastic Head have bought 50 percent of the company and they have a new label manager which is a very serious person, so we have experience an extremely big difference with the new album, things are totally different than it has been in the past. Now we have people behind usand things are released when it is supposed to be released and we have deadlines and a plan, and it has worked out relatively good now and very good compared to earlier. All in all, we are satisfied now. Also our next album will be through Candlelight actually, as we have resigned for one more album."

What is tempting about changing to a new company?

-"It would be to have a bigger system that would work seriously for us, wiht promoting the band. But it is also a bit reassuring that if Candlelight would continue in the style they are doing now and also improve the small errors that are still present, then it is reassuring to be their highest priority there and we also have good control there now. We aren't forced to go out on tour, and we have something to say regarding this which is absolutely an advantage. We also have good royalties, better than what we have gotten offered a couple of other places."

Image in Black Metal has always been important, and if we look at many of the bigger magazines lately that have done articles and interviews with Emperor, the pictures they have used of you looks really down to earth. Since you are artistic musically speaking, do you feel you are loosing something when you don't have an artistic image?

-"Well, both yes and no! If you look at the album and the new promo photos, we do still have an image but there have been a few pictures in the media

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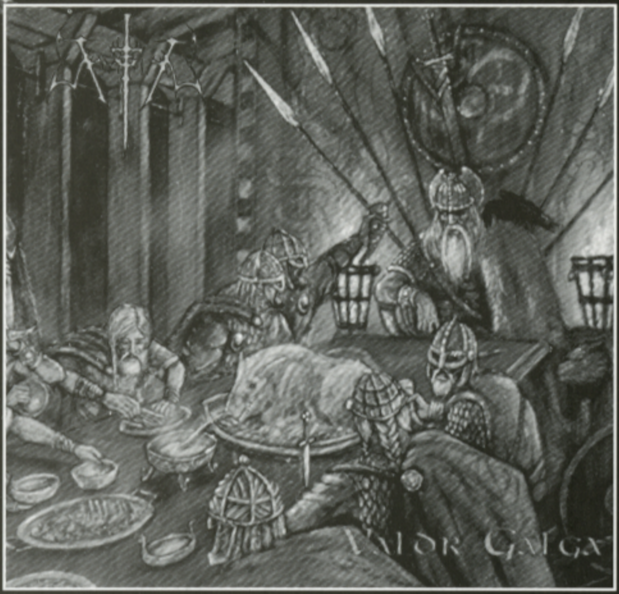
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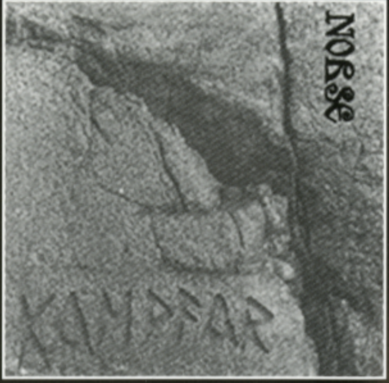
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HAMMERHEART RECORDS, POBOX 277, 6300 AG, VALKENBURG, HOLLAND. FAX: 31 (0)46 4373 800 when we have just showed up and done interviews and been taken photos of. We just showed up as we are and a few of those have been in the media, but I would still say that we have an image. It is still an important part that it has a visual image, but perhaps not as important as earlier. It is not no matter what, it is not that we have to dress up with nails or whatever just because a magazine is taking pictures of us."

Do you think far ahead musically speaking?

-"When the song starts to take shape then we think through the structure of the song and perhaps compare it with other songs we have done earlier. But mostly that is a process that goes very smoothly, things fall into position and it is not often we throw away music and rewrite the songs afterwards."

Are you also far ahead when it comes to for instance what you will have on the next album, do you have that clearly in your head already now?

-"Totally unclear! No, we haven't started thinking about that at all. On the new album as well, it took two years since we recorded "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk" untill we started with the new one and it wasn't untill the last half year before we really got active with getting the songs finished. And some of the material was also written in the studio, like the synth and vocals was made after we got into the studio."

How much technology do you think you would like to have in Emperor? I also expect that you have done some harddisk recording in the studio on the new album!

-"Yes, we have done that. Especially on the synth we have used quite a bit of that. There are a lot of possibilities one have and we are open to use the possibilities we have, but if you think about becoming more Industrial and that type of things…me personally really like Industrial inspired Metal and more technological and electronic music but I don't think that will be a much bigger part of Emperor in the future."

Photo: Morten Andersen

What is happening with your label Nocturnal Art!

-"Now I am building up a proper office in Notodden. We have signed Limbonic Art for two new albums which I am very satisfied with. They will join us on this European tour and after that they will enter the studio to record a new full length album which we hope to release around August or September. That will be our main priority this year. We are also looking for new bands. It is difficult to find bands but we are working with a couple of bands which we hopefully will sign. We have a band called Apotheosis which we had hoped to release in January or February but they have delayed their recording so extremely much so it has been postponed. That has been quite annoying since we don't have any releases now at the beginning of the year."

Could you imagine to have Emperor on your own label some day?

-"I don't really think so. I am not sure, it depends. We have been discussing that idea earlier but since Ihsahn has got such an important part in the band then it would have been easier to have created a new company which both of us handeled for Emperor."

Is it scheduled what festivals you will be playing this Summer?

-"It depends if there will be any festivals for us since we perhaps will go to the US because that will be three weeks in July. We will prioritate that instead of festivals, but it is possible there will be a festival or two in the States on the tour. We have various offers from several of the biggest festivals."

Will it be a headlining tour in the US?

-"Yeah! There are talks about Dimmu Borgir joining us on the tour but we also have a couple of other offers where we are not intended to headline."

You will very soon go out on a small tour with Morbid Angel. Do you see the possibility that your next album will be as influenced by them as what happened with Immortal's "Blizzard Beasts"?

-"No, but you can hear both on "Anthems to the Welkin at Dusk" and the new album that there are certain Morbid Angel influences. But I don't think it will be something more than that." ■

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Thorns

Thorns, the cult band from Norway has risen again. If you are one of the few who have heard their magical tapes that was spread around during the early 90's, then you will for sure be able to recall that peculiar strangeness that the music contained. If not, you are able to hear that if you get a hold of the limited version of the Thorns vs. Emperor CD that is out now, containing those old rehearsal and demo songs. Thorns is a band that is really standing on its own musical feets, and as S.W. Krupp is back on track it was time for us to dive into his musical World for the first, but not last time. Enjoy the music of Thorns while you read this interview!

By Tex Silver

I thought we could start from the beginning of Thorns' existance!

-"We started in '88 with Stigma Diabolicum. It was me and Marius Wold who put together the idea of starting a band, and then we got a hold of Bård Eithun drums, Marius had a bit of contact with him through letters. Me and Marius recorded a demo under the name of Stigma Diabolicum in '89, we got a bassist with the name of Harald Eilertsen. Then me and Harald recorded a tape under the name of "Grymyrk" in '91 or something like that so that Marius and Bård, who lived quite far away, could hear the new material we had made. But that tape was distributed a bit around so a few people have heard it. It was just bass and guitar. In the end of '92, I recorded "Ærie Descent" and "Funeral Marches to the Grave" at the school I was attending, then both Harald, Marius and Bård was still in the band. When I finished the school, me, Marius and Bård moved together to Oslo to rehearse more and to do a few more things with the band, but that never happened. We never got a rehearsalplace and we were supposed to share rehearsalplace with Mayhem, and Euronymous had big ambitions to find a huge place so that he had the possibilities to do several things. But it never happened, and I found all of this uninspiring. I was in Mayhem for a while and Euronymous in Thorns and then I stopped Thorns, and then Bård had already started to play a bit in Emperor, and I brought my material with me into Mayhem. It must have been during the end of '92, beginning of '93. During the Spring "De Mysteriis dom. Sathanas" was finished recorded and the plan was to have the Thorns material for the next Mayhem album, and we used that as the basis to make the new album with Mayhem quite shortly after "De Mysteriis dom. Sathanas". Especially considering all the time between "Deathcrush" and "De Mysteriis...". Then everything went to hell, so today I blame Satyr Wongraven if someone ask me why I still make music!"

You had decided to put everything that had to do with Thorns as a band away?

-"Yeah! I talked a bit with Samoth from Emperor about having Emperor record the finished Thorns songs, perhaps with me on guitar just to get them recorded, and then Satyr came into the picture and it developed into the Thorns vs. Emperor CD."

Even though the "Grymyrk" tape only consisted of bass and guitar, it has gotten a great response in the underground. That's a bit special!

-"Yeah, and I feel it is a bit of an unfinished thing. Others might say that if we include drums and vocals on that material it will be like interfering with a holy thing. When we recorded "You that Mingle May", which is one of the songs on the tape, with Satyr on vocals and Fenriz on drums, Fenriz said that it was like playing Smurf drums on a Bathory song! But I feel the result was very good, and I think the others will also feel that way."

Was there ever a record company in the picture?

-"No, not really! We had like an unsigned agreement with Deathlike Silence that was going to release something. Euronymous was very interested in it, he loved the whole material."

What do you think is the reason that Thorns have become such a cult band in the underground?

-"It might have something to do with the fact that it is unusual music, especially the material on the "Grymyrk" tape which was very untraditional. We had a lot of strange ideas about how the music would be on that tape, there are a lot of strange things on it. So it could be because the music is unusual, but if it is unusually good, that is for others to judge."

Especially the riffstructure is out of the ordinary. What is it that have led you to play this way?

-"If you think about what is on the "Grymyrk" tape, then I feel that almost all the songs are totally different. The way we have played the music, the way we have built it up and what type of riffs we have used. The song that was named "Lovely Children" is perhaps closest to what I think is Black Metal riffs, while "You that Mingle May" is built around a Folk Music beat in a bit nastier way with the melodies. We had a strange idea about stealing evil children melodies, music for naughty children or something! "Fairytales" had also some of the same idea but done in a different way, maybe a bit more dramatic. Then we have "Thule" which is very monotonous and pompous in a way. "Fall" is quite fast, and then we have "Høme" which turned into "Ærie Descent" after a while, which is perhaps the song that we brought with us to finish off "Ærie Descent" and the two new songs that came after. I still think in a very varied way when I make the songs and I think it is important that each song have its own style. When you hear the next Thorns album I don't think you will say that everything resembles, I think it will be quite varied. I want that each song will stand as its own personality, I try to find the essence in the songs and emphasize that."

Do you have the same enthusiasm concerning Thorns now as you had in the past?

-"In a different way really. I had more ambitions to make the nastiest music one could make earlier, now I have ambitions to experiment more and create new atmospheres, which I also had back then, but I am perhaps not as angry as I was then. But my songs get more and more angry, so I don't know. I think I am more capable of getting across what I want now compared to earlier, even though I don't have the same ambitions to make grim music, in a way it becomes grimmer now."

How is it to play with Thorns now compared to earlier, since it was more like a scene back then?

-"In a way it was better earlier since one got more feedback from others and it was a lot closer, exchanging ideas and such. Inspiring eachother, but in another way it was more stressy because there were high demands about following the moral codes one had in the scene back then. Now I don't have that many people around me who inspire me musically in that way, it is more relaxing now."

Head Not Found was supposed to release Thorns, for two, three, four years or something like that!

-"Yeah, something like that! More like for three or four years. I am not sure why it never happened. Then Moonfog came into the picture and wondered if it was okay that they could do it, and I said yes to that since I assumed it would be a little better structure on things there. I didn't have any contact with Metalion during that

time, so I don't really know why it never happened!"

Who's really behind Thorns these days?

-"It is me at the moment who is doing the music and I have with me a guy who is doing a classical education within music. The idea is that I will be cooperating a bit with him. I am not sure how interested he is in it, but if he makes something that is good then I will use him. I do look upon Thorns as sort of a project, where I used different people and different solutions to get what I want. A band, I think it will be too stressy, both socially and that I have to listen to the others in the band. One can't be like a dictator! One could of course but it would only turn into disagreements and unfriendlyness. I find it to be okay to work alone,or to get resources from other people when it is needed, so at the moment it is just me and my orchester man. Hellhammer called like yesterday to congratulate me with the album and I had plans to call him to ask if he wanted to play drums on the next album, and he was really interested in that. So there is a possibility to have him play the drums and he is really skilled too."

You're not interested in getting a live lineup established?

-"No, I'm not really that interested in playing live. First of all I am not that keen on going to concerts and my hearing is so destroyed that I don't get what is happening. I get most out of music when I am at home, listening to the music that is recorded in a proper studio. Expression wise, I don't think it would be possible to re-create Thorns live as good as it is on CD. If I would have done something live, I would rather have made a different concept. I am not sure what it would be but some sort of performance, but then again it would have been wrong to call it Thorns, so I don't think there will be any concerts with Thorns."

If we go into the Thorns vs. Emperor CD, how did you think when you did the new versions of your own material?

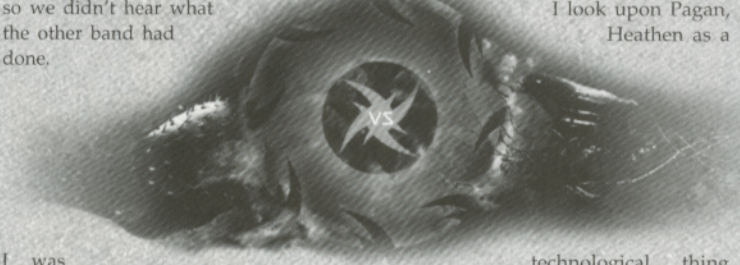
-"I thought like, with "Ærie Descent" first, that I assumed that Emperor would play quite a plain Black Metal version of it so I wanted to do something a bit different myself. In a way I was finished with that song so I wanted to do something new with it, try to bring it forward though it was very difficult. I have such a strong relationship with that song so it was very difficult to cross the view on the song which I have had. I feel that I did something new with it, it turned out more industrial than it has been. With "Discipline of Earth", I wanted to record that song the way it was supposed to be recorded, since it has never been recorded before. And a major part of the song was finished less than a year before the album was recorded, and that is quite unusual. All the other Thorns songs are ten years old or something! "Melas Khole" was originally "Funeral Marches to the Grave", which I wanted to change the lyrics to and record over again. A bit of the basis for that song was that I hadn't heard "Funeral Marches to the Grave" for several years and I didn't remember how it was arranged. The arrangements on that song is completely different from "Funeral Marches to the Grave" though it is basically the same riffs. I have experimented a bit with that song, compared to how it was originally. But I think "The Discipline of Earth" is sort of the song that is reborn on that album, and it is the song that is closest to the basis of the song when it was written. Both "Ærie Descent" and "Funeral Marches to the Grave" are old song which I have done changes with."

What was the basis for you when you did "Cosmic Keys", which originally is the Emperor song "Cosmic Keys to my Creations and Times"?

-"My basis was the part of the song which was most obvious to me, that had most identity, though afterwards I have heard that there's not that many people who connect that song with that riff. But it was that part of the song which I wanted to do something with and my whole version is built around that riff and I have worked a bit with some samples and made new lyrics."

You didn't cooperate with Emperor during the creation of this CD, right!?

-"No, actually not! I thought that was interesting that we didn't have any contact during that period so we didn't hear what the other band had done. I was thinking about getting in touch with Samoth to get him to send over some of the music they would have on the CD and at the same time send them some of the material I had made, but I think in a way that it perhaps could have affected us, and I am against that."



If we would get into the lyrics as well, they are really out of the ordinary compared to the type of Metal lyrics most people are listening to. That does as well go hand in hand with the music which is out of the ordinary, but what is it that inspire you in this field?

-"I can take all the songs since they have a different story. "Ærie Descent" was oroginally a bit "typical" Black Metal lyrically of Thorns, which I managed to spot a bit different meaning behind. I rewrote the lyrics a bit to meet the meaning I managed to read out of the lyrics. It is in two levels sort of, on one side it is directly written what it is all about if you manage to get what it says, and the other level is some kind of metaphor for a lyric about fear. I rewrote it a bit to get it more in that direction, so in a way it is about fear. "Melas Khole" is Greek and means black bodyfluid, and it is from that word melancholy is originating from. In that lyric I have made Melas Khole into a name of a person, where Melas Khole is singing to another guy telling him how pathetic and laughable he is. It is the melancholy who is making fun of his victim in a way. "The Discipline of Earth" is more standard Black Metal lyric, more standard armageddon lyrics. Like the dead shall ride over the earth and rise from their graves. It is an expression for a different kind of fear, perhaps like pre-milennium tension."

You did also a version of "The Pagan Winter" for the Darkthrone jubileum CD. What went through your head when you made that interpretation?

-"What I did was that first I recorded "The Pagan Winter" in a quite normal way, with guitar, bass and more or less copied Fenriz's drums with a drummachine. Then I was wondering what I should do since it is impossible to do it in a more necro way that what Darkthrone is doing. It would also have been difficult to play it the way I would have done because there are some riffs in that song which I never would have used myself. It wouldn't have sounded good if it was done in a Thorns way of playing it, it only sounds good when Darkthrone is playing it since they play it so diehard Black Metal. The associations I get from "The Pagan Winter" is cold futuristic, technological coldness. I look upon Pagan, Heathen as a technological thing and it becomes a technological Winter when I translate the lyrics to my personal symbolworld. I tried to make it a cold, technological affair out of it and I think it worked out quite good really. Even though it has become a bit industrialized and it is very difficult to make industrial things out of Black Metal, since Black Metal is as varied and it has so many beatchanges while industrial things are often very monotonous. But I think it works on that song since it is totally chaotic. There are a couple of parts of the song that I didn't like which I have really put noises over. Those parts sound really good when Darkthrone are playing them, but in this connection it sounded really bad so I had to remove them all together, melodically speaking. Then I also rewrote the lyrics a bit to get it more alongside the vision I got and the music."

I feel that Thorns is really looking into the future, both with the lyrics and the music, and in that aspect I feel that one could sort of expect almost anything from you. Especially if we compare the situation today where most bands are repeating the same boring story endlessly. But in what musical direction do you feel you are heading?

-"I want to make more general things which isn't that aimed at just that, but which can give associations in many different directions. But I don't want to make any cyber stuff and get hooked up in a thing. I think I will make something that isn't directed to a direct World or a period in time, or something that just try to describe Gothic churches and Satanism. I want to try to make both the musical expression and the lyrical expression timeless, that is a small goal I have."

Do you feel you have to limit yourself with the things you are doing in order to not take off?

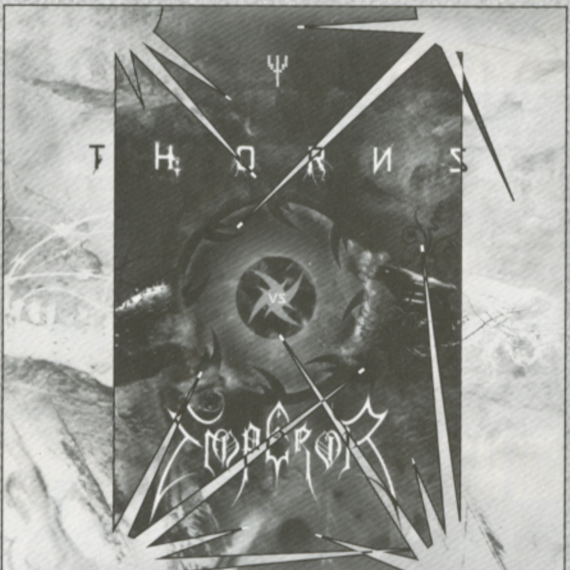
-"Yeah, I hear that people are saying that I do take off at times, even though I work really hard not to do it. The guy I talked to a while ago labelled my music as psychedelic Black Metal and when I think about it I understand what he meant. In one way I try to keep things within the frames that are called Black Metal which the audience can handle but at the same time I want to expand those limits. But if I will do something that is really out then it is a possibility I will release that under a different project."

You are working on the the new Thorns album now, right?

-"Yes."

What kind of soundpicture are you aiming for here?

-"I think it will be varied! It depends on what I want which each song. The first song I am finished with is a strict Metal song with a high tempo, being aggressive, a bit grand in a way. But the next song which I am working on now is quite deep, so I think it will be a bit varied." ■



Soundcheck

		Fenriz Darkthrone	Frost Satyricon	Maniac Mayhem	Satyr Satyricon	Shagrath Dimmu Borgir	Total
Emperor Ix Equilibrium		8	4	9	6,5	10	37,5
Immortal At the Heart of Winter		9	6	7	6	9	37,0
Exhumed Gore Metal		6,5	1	5	4,5	10	27,0
Thyrane Black Harmony		7,5	5	5	5	3	25,5
Mactätus Provenance of Cruelty		6	0	6	4,5	6	22,5
Hellfire Into Fire		6,5	5	3	5	0	19,5
Peccatum Strangling from Within		6	0	7	2,5	4	19,5
Daemon The Second Coming		5	1	4	4,5	2	16,5
Rok This is Satanik		8	3	2	2	0	15
Kill II This Deviate		3	0	2	4,5	2	11,5

album attack

DEATHWITCH
THE FINE ART OF MURDER
MALEVOLENT CREATION
MESHUGGAH
CHAOSPHERE
NECROPHAGIA
THORNS
EMPEROR
Usurper
VADER
LIVE IN JAPAN

Note that all CD's have been played with massive headphones and high volume for maximum punch in the brain.

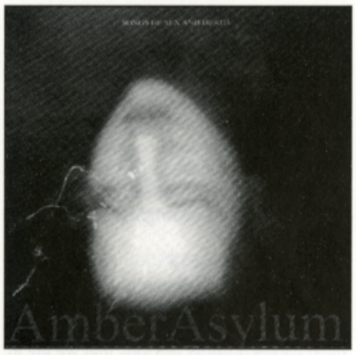
AFTERMATH
“Eyes of Tomorrow”
BLACK LOTUS RECORDS

This album sounds like it is from a band from the late 80's/early 90's who never made it and never managed to record an album that became something else that just forgotten, and it is! This album has only been available in Europe as import prior to now, and quite frankly I don't think anyone have cared about that. It is a tame, technical and not very catchy album recorded by mature musicians, playing music that isn't really what I look forward to when thinking about music. They never managed to really do something outstanding, though the album is listenable. Just not something more. 56:13

ALLISON
“Symmetry”
GOLDTRACK RECORDS

Some crossover Metal/Hardcore is not that interesting one could easily say, and Spanish Allison doesn't make a difference with their second rate Crossover Metal. A few innovative parts is all, the rest sounds like just another one of these boring Crossover Metal bands that cannot do anything except sounding normal and uninteresting. 43:17

AMBER ASYLUM
“Songs of Sex and Death”
RELEASE



I am really drawn towards the dakr and mysterious light that shines bright on this album. It is so genuine, massively relaxing but at the same time almost hypnotic and really focused. The violin create that eeriness to it that is really great, while all the other instruments are mixed into the music in a mysterious and interesting way. If you have heard this band before and you enjoyed that, this one will also be enjoyed if my crystal ball is true. If you enjoy the mysterious and the dark in a slow and drifting manner, go check this out. 52:15

ANATA
“The Infernal Depth of Hatred”
SEASON OF MIST

Open up your guts for aggressive Death Metal, chaos and destruction rules! Raw American style Death Metal is brought to us from Sweden, and please don't expect In Flames riffs here, this is real. Disharmonic Death Metal riffs and violent, raw vocals makes us forget about the Swedish “Death” Metal for a moment, this removes most of the skin from my fists. Sharp guitarfuzz and riffs are in the main focus alongside the vocals and that is nice, and though this is not a masterpiece of endless aggression it is a good CD to listen to. They are quite traditional with many riffs that doesn't really stand out, but the aggression and some of their original ideas makes this quite okay. Recommended for Death Metal fans bored with too many easy melodies and too much emotions. This should cure your disease. 42:16

ANCIENT CEREMONY
“Fallen Angel's Symphony”
CACOPHONOUS RECORDS

The follow up album to “Under Moonlight we Kiss” is now out, and it is a fairly nice album. Highly melodic with the synth making much of the melodic side of the band. The Metal is more floating forward, as well as taking several interesting turns. But for the melodic side of the band, the synth is the basic elements. The vocaliside is mostly handeled by male vocals of different shades, while now and then female vocals add a nice flavour. If you enjoy melodic and Metal with raw vocals, synth and some female vocals, this is in my book one of the few interesting bands with just those ingredients. The female vocals have a little different shade to them than just that normal boring stuff which everyone is doing. So check it out if you are curious! 48:07

...AND OCEANS VS. BLOODTHORN
“War Vol. I”
SEASON OF MIST

The first concept based CD release from Season of Mist in the War part is Finland against Norway. I will not attempt at pointing out a winner, but the concept goes as this: each band will create two new songs, record one of the opposite band's song and to cover a track from a rather unusual group, this time GGFH. But to start with, one could say that ...And Oceans is on the melodic Metal side with nice synth alongside the nice Metal. The vocals are rather ugly and stands in opposition to the music and if you asked me they would have sounded a bit more interesting if also the music would be uglier. But they do create music and that is satisfying to the heart, even though they keep the music down on a quite normal level. Nothing that really shakes the heart but quite mid level music, unfortunately not remembered for a long time. They do an interesting interpretation of “Flesh” originally by GGFH and cover “Breeding the Evil Inside” from Bloodthorn. The obscure “Dead Men Don't Rape” originally by GGFH is what Bloodthorn have choosen, which is my highlight on this disc. Greatly monotonous with many strange sounds lurking beneath the musical surface. Even though Bloodthorn have moved away from their abyssic demo musically, they have a rather nice drive over their music which in a way makes it relaxing to listen to them. They have the nasty feeling over their music and the female vocals do add a strange aura around the music which works out in favour of the music. This band does also have their own sound and style that make them easily stand out a bit without leaving the traditional path of Metal, still possession the more extreme emotions within this type of music. Not the worst way of spending some time with I'd say. 41:57

APOPHIS
“Heliopolis”
MORBID RECORDS

With their third album German Apophis offer unusual Death Metal, quite fresh and entertaining. It is not really aggressive but more floating and mid-tempo, some cool inputs here and there with samples and synth, but just a little to make it effective. Quite a few guitarsolos as well give this more of a plain Metal feel than Death Metal, but the vocals are clearly Death and I think this band will appeal more to fans of that style than to Metal in general. No real highlight release but simply an okay album. 48:15

ARTILLERY
“Deadly Relics”
MIGHTY MUSIC

The number of re-releases from the original 80's bands seem to have no limits. This album of unreleased promo and demo material from the 80's show us a typical sounding Metal band from those days, nothing really special to be honest, except for the nostalgic trip for those old enough. You will get their three demo tapes, released during '84-'85, “Shellshock”, “Deeds of Darkness” and “Fear of Tomorrow” - plus also their promo tape from '89. All music that will appeal to those who love the sound of the 80's, that raw and nostalgic sound. 59:01

ASGAROTH
“Absence Spells Beyond”
ABSTRACT EMOTIONS

Oh yeah, I see and laugh untill midnight approach. This Spanish band is pathetic to the point of being incredibly laughable, because this is nothing but a rip off of Dimmu Borgir and emotional Metal bands, though adding an even more Hard Rock or kind approach to the music. I really puke! Just listen to track two, what a laughable idiotic bunch of wankers. It is okay not to be a good musician or a songwriter, there are a lot of you bands in circulation, but to rip off and hide it just a little bit, well, go to hell you suntanned, emotional retards. 70:34

ASHES
“...And the Angels Wept”
NECROPOLIS RECORDS

Unfortunately Ashes doesn't come up with anything new within this rather retroish style they are playing. A mixture of Heavy Metal and more raw Metal could be the key, but not here. This just becomes deadly boring, and accompanied by the incredibly dry vocals it isn't interesting. 21:34

ATARAXIA
“Historiae”
CRUEL MOON INTERNATIONAL

This new release is entirely based on ballads from the Middle Ages. Nice melodies, ancient instruments and a good atmosphere comes along. It is a relaxing journey through many sounds and feelings, both romantic and not, that grasp the basic of the music. Male and female vocals bring us through the songs and back in time. If you enjoy Folk music or ancient music then I suggest that you at least check out this record. 39:23

AURORA
“Sadiam”
SERIOUS ENTERTAINMENT

The fresh difference in the music on this band's debut album “Eos” was appreciated, but unfortunately I feel they are heading in the more normal direction, sounding a lot like most other normal bands. The opening sequenze on this mini-CD is nice, a little eerie feeling but the Metal is really too identical with so many other more average and normal bands that it really isn't interesting anymore. Too bad! This is a warm up for their upcoming second album to be out this year.

AZURE
“Moonlight Legend”
SOLISTITIUM RECORDS

Azure walks the safe steps of Black Metal with Heavy Metal stuff inside. Not interesting even if I wanted to lie. It is well-produced, and take away a little bit of the boring aura but there is still 90% boring aura left so it doesn't help. This is very typical, no innovation, lack of interesting musical ideas, totally dull and grey, yepp, this sucks! 44:13

BALTAK
“Zaginatiot Grad”
BATTLEGOD PRODUCTIONS

With the most annoying and plastic sounding drums Baltak comes forth playing Black Metal without impressing a cell of my brain. Quite fast and monotonous music that lack the feeling or the interesting themes that would have made it something else than just empty music. And really, I can't stand those plastic drums. Must be a drummachine, sounds awful. Average Black Metal, though intense and aggressive to a point, but we've heard it all before. 43:15

BEFORE GOD
"Wolves Amongst the Sheep"
SUBZERO RECORDS

Quite monotonous raw Metal is the music from Before God. It has a nice forward motion though being kept a bit down to earth by the production which limits the aggression to unfold. Before God play a form of Metal with a little Thrash touch to it. Quite fast and melodic though also mid-tempo parts are mixed together in a quite nice way. The album is enjoyable though not very hot, walking on the traditional Metal scale, nothing very original here but they do have their own sound and style. 46:09

BETHLEHEM
"Reflektionen auf's Sterben"
RED STREAM

This special mini-CD contain many of their earlier songs in a totally new wrapping. Insanity is not far away within this music and many unorthodox ideas really make this German band one of its kind. And speaking personally, my interest towards this band have increased with each release. I really think they have something to offer both musically speaking and also mentally, because with Bethlehem I feel that both are connected, which is not that common today as it used to be. The complex nature of the music and the unusual structure is interesting as the music nevertheless is catchy to the point of being easily entertaining, but also not. This is quite profound and deep, strange and far away from being just an easy listen. The riffs are sneaky and strange but moving forward into the next musical street. And what kind we find there? Nothing predictable, always a little surprise lurking for the ear to experience. 23:39

BETHZAIDA
"LXXVIII"
SEASON OF MIST

The original sounds of Bethzaida are far from an easy listening session. Longing and melancholy is hiding behind the Metal, and the complex nature of the music makes this an album you should allow yourself some time with. The first thing that caught my attention was the unusual guitarsound which kind of represent the music as well, out of the ordinary. I would only say that if you enjoy complex structures and longing emotions in the music then give this a listen or more. Individuality is always interesting…48:15

BEWITCHED
"Hell comes to Essen"
OSMOSE PRODUCTIONS

Recorded in Essen, Germany is this live album, and though I have been disappointed by the development of this band since their debut album, this one here is nice. Cool music and nice sound, the riffs sound a lot better live than on an overproduced, plastic-sounding album. This is the sound Bewitched should go for according to my taste. The only really bad thing about this is the coversong "Born to be Wild", which is one of the worst Metal songs ever made, and I also think they have too many Heavy Metal riffs which makes it sound too clean, I want more dirty Thrash! But apart from that this is a nice collection of the songs Bewitched have made, and with the livespirit it entertains me. Suppose it is cool to drink to. 45:06

BIFROST
"Mythistory"
HAMMERHEART RECORDS

This is Bifrost's third album, and we are in for an intense dose of Metal. At times too intense it might seem, with the vocals seldomly giving us a moment to catch air, while the music is quite intense as well. Quite aggressive at times, but we feel the vocals are a little bit too high in the mix now and then and removes some of the energy from the music, especially at the most intense parts. But don't get me wrong, this is not a bad album. It has many nice parts with good melodies and variation, and the intensity is mostly very positive for the music. Through these 11 tracks Bifrost belong on the harder side of Metal, though giving you a genre they fit into is not that easy. Let's say Metal, and there you have Bifrost. 41:36

BIRTHRIGHT
"Out of Darkness…"
GOOD LIFE RECORDINGS

Boring straight edge Hardcore/Metal with a bassy and monotonous production that never works in favour for the music. This is just light and dull music with nothing of interest to anybody unless they're into Hardcore. Jesp…27:58

BLACK MESSIAH
"Sceptre of Black Knowledge"
LAST EPISODE

Oh boy, where shall this pathetic thing end. Black Metal with Russian Folklore and Classical music…Zagan and Nabahm who are the two human beings (with pathetic names) making the basis of this band, are doing nothing but playing uninteresting Metal which is beyond any respect. To even dare to call this Black Metal is hopeless. A real dustbin release. 38:22

BLOOD AXIS
"Blot"
COLD MEAT INDUSTRY

Dark, relaxing sounds from Blood Axis recorded live during their Cold Meat festival appearance in November 1997 is out with the sound and feeling of a studio album. Only knowing this band from a couple of interviews I was slightly disappointed after the first couple of listens, though I experienced the music to settle down and taking shape after some more listens. It is very slow and drifting, very relaxing though taking a grip around your neck when you are totally relaxed, waking you up again. If you are unaware of this band they are filed under the style Esoteric neo-classical and goes nicely hand in hand with the profile Cold Meat have. More Arcana and Ordo Equilibrio than Brighter Death Now. 69:39

BLOOD STAINED HOST
"Individual Theatre"
THE TWELFTH PLANET RECORDS

With this album we are entering the complex and original sound of emotions and soft Metal combined in one. That is not very interesting, but the few artificial sounds they bring into the music, for one the opening intro, is nice. Wish they could have focused more on that since the listen is not appreciated since we loose the tread in the music. It gets messy and lacks a bit of forward motion. They combine normal, emotional male vocals with more rawer one, beauty/beast, and that is not positive. They have choosen to have the bass high in the soundpicture and that gives it a good bottom, but it doesn't help much when the music remains empty. They do have some good ideas now and then, but all together they drown in the music.47:25

BURNING WITCH
"Crippled Lucifer"
SOUTHERN LORD

I find really slow Doom Metal to be the utterly uninteresting, and Burning Witch is a very slow Doom Metal band. Doomy guitars, slow drums and Doomy vocals! I can't hear that this is any different from other really slow Doom Metal bands, so I'm out of here! 63:30

CARNAL FORGE
"Who's Gonna Burn"
WAR MUSIC

CARNAL FORGE
- WHO'S GONNA BURN

Really aggressive and really good! Not one wimpy part destroying the overall impression, and yeah, Carnal Forge is a very positive new experience. Razorsharp aggressive Thrash with plenty of moments for the fist to smash the wall. This incredibly aggressive debut album move my head along the waves of the music, and believe me, playing this extra loud through headphones is a crazy affair. Really brilliant! Did you like The Haunted? You like this band too, straight in your face with sharp guitars and loud drums. For an intense half hour nothing exist but thrashing rage and Carnal Forge. Forget about overmelodic wimpy Metal from Sweden, this band wipes the smile off your face. Brilliant aggressive and insane vocals just top it off alongside an extremely clear and aggressive sound! Nearly an explosion of sound! A must for enjoyers of violent and fast Metal, this is great! 29:09

CASTIGATE
"Bring me the Head of Jesus Christ"
SYSTEM SHOCK

Heavy, Powerful, Sharp and aggressive Death Metal, yeah, the debut album from Castigate is a nice one. Really slamming guitars, heavy drums and lots of Metal, fast and ripping, banging riffs and growling vocals. Not that original but this band has a nice drive over it. I am sure that if this had been released when Death Metal were at its top this would have been looked upon as boring and dull, but today this is quite fresh and deadly, despite being far from original! 40:20

CASTRUM
"Black Silhouette…"
FOLTER RECORDS

Labelling their music as sympho-epic Black Metal makes it rather obvious that we are in for something cute/ugly. I hate that balance between beautiful melodies and ugly vocals. Makes me puke. Castrum is as far from being original and interesting as a really boring and unoriginal band can be. This music lack identity. 57:56

CATHEDRAL
"Caravan Beyond Redemption"
EARACHE RECORDS

I am thoroughly bored…The doomy creatures from Britain's Cathedral continue their trademarked music, slow doomy and groovy Metal with vocals I don't like. It goes hand in hand with the latest releases from this band and it keeps itself within those limits of music. If you liked their latest album you will like this one as well…72:57

CAULDRON
"Tampering with the Unnatural"
HEADRUSH RECORDS

The vocalist sounds really lame. The music is quite nice and powerful, some sort of Hardcore/Metal stuff though becoming very boring after just a few songs. Not enough variation or on the other hand, not enough good material. And they must do something with the vocals, horrible. 39:04

COMPULSORY
"…And the Death of Vanity"
VALHALLA RECORDS

The quite undefinable style this Danish band is playing is filled with heaviness and power. There is a bottom to the sound and a clear powerful production. The guys in this band want to include everything they have been listening to and been inspired by since childhood, and though the music mostly is following one lead it is still varied. But I feel they fail to create something else than just a listenable album. The material isn't exactly brilliant, but simply just okay and that makes it boring and at times directly empty. A heavy Metalsound isn't enough, the music also needs something in addition, and this time around they haven't succeeded in that. 40:20

CORE
"Through Chaos and Disharmony"

In the vein of Meshuggah and Napalm Death is this Brazillian band that has been around since 1993 and had the opportunity to play live quite a bit, and maybe that shows in the music which is solid and tight. It is a very intense and powerful style of Metal they perform and though it is not chaotic and disharmonic as the title of this album perhaps indicate, it has got traces of it. Quite violent and very fast music result in a total inferno of guitars and harsh vocals. Not directly melodic or catchy, but straight ahead intense and vicious with lots of anger incorporated into every riff and vocalpart. 33:41

CRACKDOWN
"Rise Up"
DIEHARD MUSIC

This is the best Hardcore album I have heard. Totally intense and aggressive, fantastic sound, really sharp and focused bringing the music to its maximum. This Italian band have recorded this album in Brooklyn together with producer Mike Ferraro who has also worked with Biohazard, and the result is razorsharp and clear. Really great sound! These dudes play angry Hardcore with lots of Metal and a great heavy drive to the music, lasting from the first moment untill this one is finished. A really intense and powerful album. 39:22

CRACK UP
"Heads Will Roll"
NUCLEAR BLAST

Metal with Hardcore and Rock'n Roll and a bit of groove. Very catchy and powerful riffbased Metal, and that is cool. The music is kinda on the surface, easy to listen to and catchy. Should appeal to fans of Metal and some Hardcore. 53:59

the CROWN
"Hell is Here"
METAL BLADE RECORDS

The Crown have quite a bit of Heavy Metal and Rock'n Rollish inputs in their music, and that alone isn't bad, but unfortunately this album is. Very dry and dull, dry vocals and riffs underneath the level of joy. Track 3 is really, really bad, while track 6 is one of the better, but the vocals are just unbearable and the tame way of performing this type of Metal is just not appreciated. Under the name Crown of Thorns they did at least play aggressive Death Metal, but what is this? 47:11

CULTURE
"Born of You"
GOOD LIFE RECORDINGS

The only thing acceptable with Hardcore is the aggression, but when a Hardcore band doesn't even have that I am provoked by the sounds and the opinions these kind of garbage bands have. The music is boring and contains nothing of value. This old recording has been re-released, for Hardcore fans only! 39:27

DAEMON
"The Second Coming"
DIEHARD MUSIC

Very clear and polished sound, powerful

music and so on, but really, was it necessary to make it so shallow and boring? There is nothing in this music that gives me the feeling of dedication, and bla,bla, sure, they made the album in one week and recorded it during twenty seconds, I don't care. This isn't interesting. They play something that could have a link to Death Metal, the not so Death Metal Death Metal if you know, they have Heavy Metal riffs and parts here that of course had to be brought into the music, just to show how little these guys really care about that genre. This is really a plastic product. 31:41

DAGORLAD
"Incantations"
TWO MOONS

Inspired by horror movies from the 30's they are, and their music is in the more intense field of Metal. The use of a drummachine industrialize their sound and makes it quite harsh. The music remains quite flat and floating forward nicely, but I miss some content. It is straight ahead but I miss something to focus on. Some riffs or synthparts that stand out, but it seems to be left off the album. It doesn't mean it is a boring album though, it has some nice samples and the intensity is okay, but it is still an album that I will very easily forget. 44:51

DAMNATION A.D.
"Kingdom of Lost Souls"
REVELATION RECORDS

Mainstream Metal with a little Hardcore touch perhaps? It's quite straight forward, a little bit heavy but nothing special. It is actually special on the other side of the scale, because this is boring. Really flat sound and boring themes in the music makes this dull. And apart from the few cool riffs, I am unable to find something of interest on this CD. 46:47

DARGAARD
"Eternity Rites"
DRAENOR PRODUCTIONS

Not far from the dreamy sound of Arcana is this band, very atmospheric and floating, calm and relaxing. Perhaps a little bit more obscure than Arcana though still as atmospheric and soft. Though I prefer Arcana, this one is not far from those kind of relaxation levels. This music is mostly without vocals, but some female and raw male vocals do appear at seldom parts. 47:42

DARZAMAT
"In the Opium of Black Veil"
FAITHLESS PRODUCTIONS

On the far, far outskirts of emotional Metal is Darzamat. And it is totally emotional with lots of synth and female vocals etc. Boring, oh yeah! The music is fairly well played but not at all convincing, there is too much mediocre ideas and music here to make this shine. 26:55

DEAD
"V.I.P."
POSERSLAUGHTER RECORDS

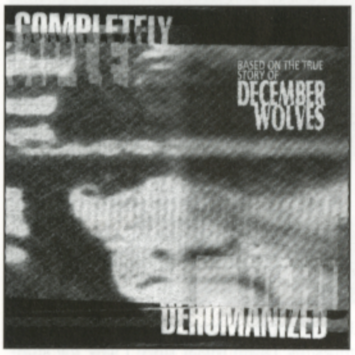
This is a farewell album from the German grinders. A very monotonous Grind/Death Metal album with low, fuzzy guitars and guttural vocals. Somewhat groovy riffs and interesting samples make out the best sides of this album, but as a whole it gets boring listening to the entire CD due to the very dry and monotonous side of it. The music in itself is rather laidback in many ways and doesn't offer highlights like killer breaks or good riffs. Just straight forward average Grind/Death. 66:06

DEATHWITCH
"The Ultimate Death"
NECROPOLIS RECORDS

After having listened to this album a number of times I can simply say that this is the best and most powerful album from Deathwitch. The raw and insane Black/Death is lifted due to the wide sound it has got, though not at all removing any of the primitive elements their earlier albums had. It has just gotten more powerful and intense. Deathwitch play Black/Death Metal with the spirit of earlier days and that is easily portrayed in the music, ripping riffs and raw vocals really make this one a great listen. No emotional synth or dreamlike female vocals, great! Just wished more bands could uphold the intensity and raw power album after album, and not many bands release a better third album than the first one, but so is the case here if you ask me. All hail to the grimness of this album, it's a stab in the arm and I can never play this loud enough. All the songs have got a raw drive to them, and it goes on like this for 46 minutes. So then, if you like intense and insane Black/Death, get this one. It holds the same raw energy as their great countrymates Nifelheim and War. Great! 46:18

DEATHWITCH
The Ultimate Death

DECEMBER WOLVES
"Completely Dehumanized"
WICKED WORLD



I am happy to experience that this American band have left the boring emotional music they once played, replaced it with fierce hatred and aggression, and the result is far better than anything linked with emotional disgusting atmospheres. This fast and ripping disc makes a difference in my ears, it stands out with some cool riffs and a really intense sound that made this listen good for my part. The drums are slamming out noise, the vocals are angry and the guitars balance on the line between melody and aggression. They have managed to come up with a sound of their own and it is very positive for the music, the intensity is solid and the whirlwind of harsh and raw Metal filters aggressive moods in my head. This is good. 31:08

DESASTER
"Hellfire's Dominion"
MERCILESS RECORDS

Pretty oldstyle Metal is coming from this German band, but the problem is basically that this is old news by now. I am a huge fan of 80's raw Metal, and I feel this band is having links with that, but it makes it oh so boring to start the CD with a normal introduction and then straight ahead with some pretty basic and "I've definitely heard this many times before" Heavy Metal/Metal. I am sure it must be killer to play this at the rehearsals and live, but this is just too typical and uninteresting by now. 46:29

DESCEND
"Beyond thy Realm of Throes"
BLACK LOTUS RECORDS

Descend perform very light and melodic Metal/Thrash that goes into one ear and out the other. Totally without any kind of content that makes music good. Fuck, I'm bored!!! It's a dry touch at times of the trademarked Greek sound, but only a few times, otherwise Descend perform music that is so dull and tame that it annoys the hell out of me. It is an album on the average scale all throughout it and not even a drop of something more. 46:12

DESTRUCTOR
"Maximum Destruction"
LISTENABLE RECORDS

Another re-release from the 80's, this time with American Destructor. On this "Maximum Destruction" we also get 6 bonus tracks compared to the original release, where two of them are live. This is quite typical 80's Heavy Metal/Power Metal without the greatest riffs, just rather average powerful Heavy Metal. Nothing really special though. 63:33

DETESTOR
"Ego"
BEYOND...PRODUCTIONS

Desite being a bit original this Italian band is really playing a musicstyle that is not really making my day. Basically raw Metal, a bit technical and a bit complex but lacking the highlights like riffs, good parts und so weiter. This mini-CD showcase a band with talent but they have still got a long, long way to go, both in the arranging of the music and the material itself, because this is just too thin to be interesting. And I am bored as well! 16:00

DIMMU BORGIR
"Spiritual Black Dimensions"
NUCLEAR BLAST

Nominated for their "Godless Savage Garden" mini-CD at the Spellemannsprisen (Norwegian Grammy), where they also performed "Grotesquery Conceiled" from their new album, then straight into 18th position on the Norwegian albumlist, and things have really exploded into galactic dimensions for Norway's biggest international Metal act. At first listen one could feel that "Enthrone Darkness Triumphant" would be a few levels above, but the more you let this sink into the dark soul, its impressive qualities kick your heart into a new beat. Because this is really a phenomenal album, direct in your face with lots of catchy tunes, melodic synth and a wide focused production. The debate whether Dimmu Borgir is really a Black Metal band or not is now so boring that it is time to look upon the music as independent. Not tied up with any genre, defining how it should be done. As everyone is still talking shit behind their back and listening to all their albums secretly, it is nevertheless a cartoonish intellectuality that certain people wish to tell everyone else about. "Spiritual Black Dimensions" has an impressive amount of strong songs, it might even top their last album, though in a different way. There is more power on this album than on the last, the music is a little bit more technical and powerful, and the light synthparts have been developed a little bit more. The result is something that will open the eyes of many musicinterested people around, and what else have the bigger Black Metal bands been interested in lately? Growing beyond the limits of Black Metal, that's exactly it. Dimmu Borgir is at the forefront of the new Satanic musicstyle, which I feel they show to its full on the new album. Satanic music that can reach a whole bunch of new souls. This album can offer you lots of really intense parts, interesting guitarriffs and solos, powerful vocals and all in all it is put together in a very good way. It would be directly unfair if Dimmu Borgir didn't succeed in becoming as exposed and popular as the really big Metal bands of today. They are good on their way, and that is fully deserved. 49:17

DOG FACED GODS
"Random Chaos Theory in Action"
GOTHENBURG NOISEWORKS

dOg Faced GOds
RaNDoM cHaOS THeorY iN ActIon

After a short intro this album kicks off with a blasting sound and intensity. Really heavy and powerful, not that melodic thankfully and raw Metal neatly balanced into a furious drive. A tiny bit of that Industrial intensity Meshuggah is known for can be found on this album and the basis of the music is Metal with influences from Industrial Metal and Hardcore. Especially the Hardcore aggression and intensity can be found on this album, with angry vocals and really heavy and pounding guitars. 47:33

DOLORIAN
"When all the Laughter has gone"
WOUNDED LOVE RECORDS

The atmospheric fields of Metal is where this Finnish band is taking us, and with clear resemblances to Monumentum they sort of make it easy to put them into that style of music, though being more Metal. Nothing that exciting really, quite usual but at the same time it is relaxing and okay, without having any special highlights present. The music is floating ahead nicely and with a little touch of a dark presence it works out okay. 53:13

DRASTIC
"Thieves of Kisses"
BEYOND...PRODUCTIONS

I don't need to say that this must be the most idiotic albumtitle for a long time. But ignoring that tremendously provoking aspect, Drastic is above what you might think regarding such a title. Their music is rather pretentious in a way, but at the same time really easy to get into. It is a very light form of Metal they perform, with a drummachine and some techno beats a few times. It also include lots of new and interesting sounds which makes this a bit fresh. Not that great but still an okay album if you like it light and melodic. Undefinable musicstyle. 47:58

DRAWN
"Plan Be"
PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS

Emotional Metal is the trademark of Prophecy Productions from Germany and so could also this Norwegian band be filed under. It's is nicely played resulting in a harmonic and good mini-CD. A little bit progressive Metal is incorporated in the relaxing tunes they play and it's a laidback listen we are in for, all based in the slow tempo. Floating guitars and floating music that perhaps will close your eyes and open your ears. 29:37

DRECKSAU
"Brecher"
NUCLEAR BLAST

Totally heavy and powerful Metal, incredibly heavy, fuzzy guitars that continue and continue to fill my head with slow and drifting tempos. The music holds a very powerful suggestive drive with its intense power, though it never gets fast but maintains a slow to mid-tempo pace. Drecksau do nevertheless keep up the interest in the music due to the heaviness. Almost doomy one could say. The lyrics are sung in German which might sound a bit strange, but bang your head to the music and you won't hear them. 44:09

DRILLER KILLER
"Reality Bites"
KRON-H

The one-dimentional aspects of Hardcore and Punk comes to light with "Reality Bites". The same tempo in most of the songs, quite the same the whole CD if you ask me. I am not fond of this type of music I have to say, I find it boring and dull. Not aggressive and not containing music that ripps. "Don't Point" is my favourite on this CD, and also the most untypical. The last half an hour of this disc is livematerial with bad sound. But it is a good Hardcore/Punk CD, but does it matter? 70:58

DØDHEIMSGARD
"666 International"
MOONFOG PRODUCTIONS

What a massive development from their recent "Satanic Art" mini-CD! Considering the fact that the mini-CD contained material that is like three years old by now, a development would be expected. Though I think that this will be a little further than what you might have assumed. With this album, their third, Dødheimsgard have really positioned themselves in a new style of musical expression. And really, this is musical expression. This is an album to really explore, an album to really get into full time. I am totally bored by all the albums that sound the same every single time you listen to them. This is much more, far away from mass produced music. This is music, handcrafted and polished by neatly placed hands, not by machines. The variation that the music offer makes it a tremendously interesting album, there's always something new that pops up each time you listen to it, and every time I play this it gets more full and more settled. This is not an album you should listen to once and bombastically make an impression about, then you will only fool yourself. Listen to it a few times and it all goes hand in hand, the arrangements are totally brilliant and clever and it turns into a incredibly dangerous CD. There are so many interesting parts and smart moves, it turns into a must to listen to it more and more, just to discover yet another aspect and yet another magic touch it has got. I would rather leave the musical definition up to you, because this doesn't fit into a genre, though Metal it is. Raw as Hell's magic, sneaky as the Devil, smart as the intelligent man and it gets under your skin like a bright, shining needle. This is splendid insane magic! Approx. 45:00

EBONYLAKE
"On the Eve of the Grimly Inventive"
CACOPHONOUS RECORDS

If you are looking for an album it would take a long time to get into, then I would suggest this one. There is a tremendous amount of things happening in the music, simultaneously, that it really demans quite a lot of listening before it settles in. But does it really take off when it has settled? Not for me, but I still enjoy the album. I find this to be artistic music, as well as experimental, because this is really far away from being catchy. I would not be far from the point by saying this is very complex and musically sophisticated. The music could be classified as complex Metal, fast with quite raw vocals. Not your teenage project, this seems really like it is profound music.

EISREGEN
"Krebskolonie"
LAST EPISODE

With the most used and idiotic intro one can imagine (rain and thunder, plus an alarm) Eisregen must be pathetic simply judging by that. German lyrics, totally uninteresting music and the list could go on. Yet another compulsory dustbin release from Last Episode. Cozy and incredibly pathetic synth, empty music…It is amuzing to see how hard untalented musicians try to come up with something new within "Black Metal". 51:52

the ELYSIAN FIELDS
"We…The Enlightned"
WICKED WORLD

Fucking intense and raw! Incredible sound that fits the music to the maximum, diverse music where I enjoy the fast and intense parts the most. Especially the last part of the third track, a highlight on this CD when played with high volume. This Greek band have earlier released an album on Unisound a few years back in time, but this is how they sound today and the development is for the better. Really wide sound, heavy music with a combination of more slow and perhaps emotional parts before all of a sudden exploding into a furious speed. Rather untypical Metal makes this a band difficult to place in a genre, but the Metal is intense, they have some synth and some floating guitars. Variation and intensity are keywords here. 47:16

EMINENZ
"Anti-Genesis"
LAST EPISODE

Yet another German Black Metal band pathetic beyond words. Unoriginal music with lots of synth, boring vocals, a total lack of good riffs and the synth and vocals beyond higher in the production than the electric guitar. Belongs in the dustbin. 55.23

EMPEROR
"Ix Equilibrium"
CANDLELIGHT RECORDS

I really like the brutal and intense parts on this album and I equally dislike the "sophisticated" parts with more normal vocals and music. That is really not touching my interest. In that aspect I don't really manage to get into this album as a whole, and also in the part of Emperor sounding more plain Metal than ever before. It just doesn't fit together with the trademark name like Emperor. But that is another story, this album is both powerful and melodic and if "Anthems…" please you, this one will as well. 44:03

ENOCHIAN CRESCENT
"Babalon Patralx de Telecvovim"
AVANTGARDE MUSIC

Not long after their debut for Woodcut Records is another release available from these men from Finland. This time a mini-CD to shorten the wait for their second full CD due out later this year. Ugly vocals and not really ugly music is what you will get here. There isn't much darkness in the music and that makes this quite a bit ordinary. They have several good parts but it's very much down on the ground. The music has also a Heavy Metal feel to it many times and that isn't very interesting I have to admit. But it is quite catchy despite all the standard vibes I get out of this. If the music at least had a trace of darkness, then it would have been more interesting. 17:11

EPOCH OF UNLIGHT
"What will be has been"
THE END RECORDS

I really dislike this one. I think the bandname is bad, the title of the album even worse and the music is just messy with ridiculous vocals at times. The Donald Duck vocals are a joke and this band is not a very gifted one. A really boring production with boring fuzz on the guitars and…no, honestly a real dustbin friend! 47:56

ESQUARIAL
"Amorphous"
PAGAN RECORDS

Real dark and sombre Death Metal, heavy fuzz, technical riffs and low vocals. It's not that aggressive, but still they manage to keep the interest up due to the intensity and diversty they offer. Some cool guitarsolos make it nice, some slower parts before again forcing through with bombing heaviness. I really like the dark production they have given this album, and all the disharmonic tones bring me back to old Death Metal. This music doesn't invite you despite some more Heavy Metal parts, you forget about that when the Death Metal comes back in control. Polish Death Metal, forget about commercial diseases! 36:12

EVEN SONG
"Path of the Angels"
DISPLEASED RECORDS

Read the albumtitle five times, read the name of the band three times and you must surely understand that this is really crap emotional Metal with female vocals and piano/synth. Heard it before, many times! 45:19

EVOKE
"Dreaming the Reality"
SYSTEM SHOCK

Fuck yeah, good old nasty Death Metal the good way! Guttural vocals, smashing drums and dark, fuzzy guitars. This is nasty and un-nice with many good riffs and a feeling in the music that makes you feel unwelcomed. This is exactly Death Metal, raw and unpassionate. You have 12 tracks plus the opening intro to taste and it does taste good. Bring forth the knife and cut the mark of death on your shoulder, Evoke rules! 40:16

EXHUMED
"Gore Metal"
RELAPSE RECORDS

Unbelievable! I have not been moved so much by Death Metal since I saw the stunning performance from Cannibal Corpse in Oslo two years ago or something. Fantastic, this incredible disc from Exhumed is insane, brutal, mindraping, just brilliant! Sick and fast Death Metal in an intense and powerful way I have seldom witnessed, I am in shock! The whole listen is a trip in intensity and brutality, from the first second to the last. The track "Limb from Limb" does also have one of the best intro's the 90's have to offer on a Metal album, slicing the brain completely. The vocals are divided in two, one totally guttural, the other totally crazy. The sound is just excellent, bringing every instrument to its maximum climax. I'm speachless! This fantastic CD kicks off with the amazing "Necromaniac" and ends off with a totally raw and insane version of Sodom's "Sodomy and Lust". My favourite Death Metal CD alongside killers like Cannibal Corpse "Vile" and "Gallery of Suicide". 43:31

FIRSTBORN EVIL
"Rebirth of Evil"
GUARDIANS OF METAL

Very, very bad shit indeed. They flirt with Cradle of Filth Black Metal and in addition to that they play just simple Metal with much Heavy Metal structure. The music is as close to being talentless as one could get and it is really bad. Some Hardcore things are in here as well, and if this band is one of the best Portuguese Black Metal bands, well, that should tell it all. This is crap! 41:29

FORCED TO DECAY
"Perkussive Perlokution"
SYSTEM SHOCK

Despite being quite diverse in their music, this band still becomes dry and one-dimentional. Some sort of ugly Grindcore and then mid-tempo Gothicish Metal with normal male vocals. The music is a bit minimalistic and to my taste never coming to a point of interest. Grindcore mixed with slower emotional Metal may sum up this one. 36:18

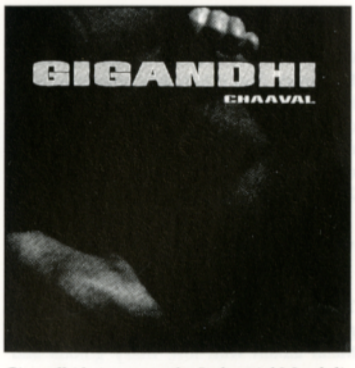
FROM THE DARK
"In the Shadow of Kaos"

New Zealand is our next stop, and Black Metal is the style. Quite emotional Black Metal with lots of synth and really ugly vocals, sounds familiar? Unfortunately it is, and they do really not manage to spice their music with something outstanding. The music in itself is quite usual, the only thing is the vocals that varies a bit between plain ugly, to more melancholic and longing. It is nicely played but contains too much of the material we have heard for the last couple of years, and too bad, but it just gets tiring and too normal for the mind to catch it. 52:50

GANDALF
"Deadly Fairytales"
WICKED WORLD

The debut album from Finland's Gandalf turned out a bit too ordinary, I had expected a bit more aggression and groove, but it sounds a little like the last album from Carcass. It's too clean Metal with a lack of identity, not that many rememberable moments and a very typical structure in the music. And I have to say that when the music is this down to earth and normal, I had almost expected something a bit original, thinking that the band most likely would like to stand on their own feet. This album doesn't and it is just really typical and empty as a whole. Nice guitars and mid-tempo music has in a way been done so many times before that it strikes me as odd that nothing else has been incorporated in the music. Like for instance killer riffs. But having said that, this album does have its moments when the level of intensity in their music is rising, for instance on the track "Dark Memories" which holds a good drive and a nice aggression. I would have liked to see more of that and less of Carcass. 46:45

GIGANDHI
"Chaaval"
EUPHONIOUS RECORDS



Gigandhi bring us to the Industrial Metal dimension on this album, their second one. "Chaaval" could be linked with the brilliant "Songs of Love and Hate" by Godflesh, sometimes this album has the same drive and feeling, but only at times. Because bringing Godflesh in as a comparison it is obvious that the Britts are a few steps ahead of Gigandhi. Like for instance "Cold" has strong links with Godflesh, especially the first part of the song, but what sets these two bands apart is that Godflesh manage to keep the interest up in the music a lot more than what these guys manage so far. There are plenty of cool and interesting musical transportation parts here but also many parts where I forget about the music and can't remember a thing that happened during the last 10 minutes. Speaking about "Cold" which is one of my favourite tracks on this album, the Industrial elements make this music both personal and distant/cold, which is a very interesting balance and nerve in the music. Makes me interested, because Gigandhi have got a lot of cool music to offer. And the coverversion they have done of "Justify my Love" (Madonna/Lenny Kravitz) is a real coverversion, they have really rearranged and reshaped the whole song into something original and good. 65:18

GOLGOTHA
"Elemental Changes"
REPULSE RECORDS

I really think this band and the music they play is utter crap. Very light Metal with synth and a vocalist that sound really bad. Light happy music that I assume should be emotional and nice, no way ma'am. I listen to Metal to get aggression and hate, not to be reminded about my grandmother. 59:03

GORE BEYOND NECROPSY
"Noise-A-Go-Go"
RELAPSE RECORDS

With the incredible amount of 59 tracks on this 25 minute long CD you can probably imagine the length of each track! Really noisy and unstructured, and with all the songs, this album never gives me the feeling of being a real album. To me, this must be a joke! Grind for the sick. 24:56

GOOSEFLESH
"Welcome to Suffer Age"
GOLDTRACK RECORDS

Crossover Metal might be the closest description on this band, playing their intense Metal though also groovy style. It is a combination of really hard Metal at times and then also Black Sabbathish Metal that together sounds quite interesting. Though I have to admit, it gets a bit boring due to lack of something concrete in the music, but the most intense and hard parts are good. The more Doomy parts becomes a bit unoriginal. Machine Head combined with Black Sabbath could have been used as a sales point for this one. Into normal Metal? Gooseflesh is not a bad alternative for your collection. 20:29

GOTHIC
"Prelude to Killing"
MAFIA UNDERGROUND PROD.

This one consist of quite raw Death/Grind, though also having more quiet moments before again totally destroying everything with raw and crushing noise. But unfortunately this becomes a bit dull due to lack of interesting themes. Rather average music and riffs which result in more noise than joy. 14:22

GRAVELAND
"Immortal Pride"
NO COLOURS RECORDS

With a very distinct underground sound Graveland is again offering floating and quite original ideas into their music. Compared by their label to Bathory's "Hammerheart" might not be that far from the point, because it has a little of that feeling and drive to it . But if one should compared this one to "Hammerheart", it is evident that this is far more underground sounding and less tight, to put it mildly. And to precise the original level mentioned earlier, the music in itself isn't original if we analyze it, it is more original due to the fact that they have their own sound to a certain extent. But if you like floating Metal with synth and underground spirit, this might be the next album you purchase. 50:29

the GREAT KAT
"Bloody Vivaldi"
TPR MUSIC

The eccentrism of the Great Kat is again among us in the shape of a 4 track CD. Massacring Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" and lots more. No doubt that this female creature is more entertaining live than on CD but it works out good during these songs. High speed electric guitars and violins make the center of the music. Blood, screams and torture surrounds the music of insanity.7:26

GRIEF OF EMERALD
"Nightspawn"
LISTENABLE RECORDS

Oh, please, do I have to? Yes! But why? Just do it, come on! But pleeeeaaase, I don't want to review this one, it's so booooring! Do it or I'll make you interview them as well, you fuck! Okay, well, eh, they come from Sweden. They play melodic Death Metal and they are really, really boooooring. Where's my teddybear? Get a grip, tell them why this is so boring you emptyhead! Well, I just think it lacks power, aggression and great riffs. It sounds really tame and passive and incredibly ordinary and average. To be honest I am quite provoked! I understand, but calm down! No way, man! Grief of Emerald should break up, I don't want them to continue! They are sooo boring and dull. Why can't they come up with something interesting or something new? Why do they have to play so many boring riffs and look so much without identity or talent? Is it because they come from Sweden? No little dude, remember, Sweden have got bands like Dissection, Morbid, Deathwitch, Nifelheim and Vondur, you remember! Yeah, they are cool. I like Sweden, but only the shadowside. There is so much light in Sweden, I don't like that! Good night dad! Good night dude! 43:08

GROINCHURN
"Fink"
MORBID RECORDS

Really groovy and cool Grind Core for a total of 21 tracks. Many cool riffs and groovy moments, based around very crunchy guitars and a clear and powerful production. Very intense but toally structured and not far from real Death Metal, this is cool! Together with all the intensity they have riffs which lift the material and make it a really nice listen. The songs stand out from eachother and the material is nicely varied, but don't worry, even though the material is clearly structured, this is sick and insane. 36:27

HAEMORRHAGE
"Anatomical Inferno"
MORBID RECORDS

Quite normal Grindcore is what Spain's Haemorrhage is giving us. Nothing really out of the ordinary, so we are in for a standard Grindcore album without the extra sick parts and the killer riffs. But the music has a nice float and sound and despite sounding a bit too standard for my taste, this wasn't bad. 14 fast songs with growling vocals and lots of guitars and drums to fill your head with. 30:31

HEIDENREICH
"Trance of an Unholy Union"
NAPALM RECORDS

This Austrian band is not your usual cup of Metal, quite avantgardish and original, but the music is not very interesting to listen to. Too much mess, not very catchy and the material isn't something to take off your hat to either. The only thing that is ordinary about this band is that the music is boring, lacks interesting riffs and cool parts and it goes straight into the dustbin. 41:32

HELLFIRE
"Into Fire"
NO COLOURS RECORDS

Remember the first Bathory album, this is similar. The same sound, the same feeling and the same raw intensity, though not as great as the classic. Still nasty enough to shake the heart a bit and very much recommended for those who need Black Metal to sound like the older bands. Close your eyes and let the spirit of old Bathory embrace you. 25:52

HIMINBJORG
"Where Ravens Fly"
RED STREAM

This French band was a new aquaintance for me, and I have to say this is quite nice. Raw and melodic Black Metal but not the normal way. This is something slightly different. The feeling in the music is to me real Black Metal, straight forward, raw and intense with a little presence of something Devilish. They also have some more Viking Metal inputs, but as long as they are okay that only enrich the music. Though honestly I would have preferred a monotonous Black Metal album I have to admit this variation is working out good. The drive is present in the music and it is a constant forward motion with nice melodies and intensity. It also has a nice obscure touch at times, a feeling of an undefinable presence and that can't be praised enough. This album is for those of you who want some content within the music, something to listen to and escape into. 43:12

HORDE OF WORMS
"Horde of Worms"
BLOODBUCKET PRODUCTIONS

Blasting Grind Metal, with a small touch of the now varied Black Metal sound. Quite intense and raw, and if you like your Grind that way this should be fine. This Canadian band is quite brutal and raw, really fast and with incredibly ugly vocals they will not appeal to grandma, I suppose! 27:38

HORRIFIED
"Animal"
BLACK LOTUS RECORDS

Very average, not interesting Metal that has no or little charisma or identity. Sounds like whatever not so interesting band from somewhere with good production and a lack of interesting content in the music. I'm soo bored! 33:46

HOUWITSER
"Death…but not Buried"
DISPLEASED RECORDS

Very brutal Death Metal that at a high volume will hit your brain like a small bullet. Not original or anything, just traditional Death Metal with a little twist. It works out good if you are in your splendid insane Death Metal mood because this has got a great deal of aggression and brutality. The production is really brutal which further emphasize the brutality in the music. But stay away if you want something original. 36:47

HYPNOSIA
"Violent Intensity"
IRON FIST PRODUCTIONS

Killer Deaththrash in the old style. Really fast and aggressive, I raise my fist and bang my head totally out of shape! This mini-CD is a cool thing, not original or anything, but it has that great drive and aggression to it. That sharp guitarsound and a touch of Kreator on the vocalside make this one a cool listen. 17:06

IMMORTAL
"At the Heart of Winter"
OSMOSE PRODUCTIONS

Immortal
At The Heart Of Winter

Immortal's fifth album brings us into a little new musical development for the band. I had to listen to both "Battles in the North" and "Blizzard Beasts" a great number of times before they really became magnificent, and in a little way this one is similar. It got better and better the first times I listened to it, but then it stopped. It never reached that great Immortal standard as the earlier albums did. Immortal's musical development have lead them into a more normal style and thus also removed some of the magic in the music. It is not that unique anymore, it is more laidback and I really miss the aggressive speed on the earlier albums. But I still think this is an okay album, but I am afraid it will be overshadowed by great releases like "Pure Holocaust" and "Battles in the North". This is Immortal's most normal, and also least good album to date. 46:09

IMPERIAL
"Thrasheurs 13"
OSMOSE PRODUCTIONS

Imperial
Thrasheurs 13

The production reminds me of Massacra's "The Final Hour", especially the guitars and drums. Imperial play Thrash with links to old Kreator, ugly vocals and not directly catchy music. But it is intense and aggressive, and as far from being commercial as one could get still staying within this genre. It's not really that good, but I enjoy it due to the Thrash riffs and the ugly atmosphere. Dirty Thrash to warm you up for their next album, "Malmort". 17:52

IMPERIAL DOMAIN
"In the Ashes of the Fallen"
PULVERISED RECORDS

Really, really bad Swedish cute Metal. Totally wimpy riffs and a production lacking identity. The music is a combination of Heavy Metal and very wimpy and melodic a-typical Swedish "Death" Metal with no power or intensity. A dustbin release! 36:13

IN AETERNUM
"And Darkness Came"
FROM THE DARK PRODUCTION

After a rather cliché and boring intro this Swedish outfit bring us midpaced Metal with raw vocals. A touch of the old days comes forth in the music which could be classified as underground Metal. It's a mini-CD consisting of 3 track plus the intro and walks on the traditional path of Metal, quite raw and drifting, a little touch of abyss and it has a nice drive. Though some striking riffs would be appreciated. Not a highlight but neutrally placing itself as a listenable underground release.17:11

INCINIA
"Saviour"

This really smells like Christian leftovers. Really flat music, no soul and a vocalist who either can't sing or really wanted to be somewhere else when they recorded this plastic pile of rubbish. It is rather well played though remarkably flat and lifeless, really sterile. Heavy Metal is the music they play and apart from that nothing is interesting. 30:32

INIQUITY
"The Hidden Lore"
MIGHTY MUSIC

Technical, complex and brutal Death Metal is also the ingredients on the second release from Denmark. As with their debut album "Serenadium", also this one is a thick stab of raw and brutal Death Metal, lots of pounding riffs and technical arrangements. This mini-CD contains four songs of equal brutality and is a great solution when you are bored or just want to listen to some good, heavy and brutal Death Metal. 20:50

IN THE WOODS…
"Strange in Stereo"
MISANTHROPY RECORDS

The mysterious and twisting landscapes of In the Woods…' music is on this album for sure capturing its surroundings. Strong grip on my ears with its profound and drifting music, where Metal is neatly underlining the intelligent touch the music has got. It's a red musical tread through the whole album, every tone and sound goes hand in hand with eachother in a way that makes the album interesting and capturing. It is laidback and relaxing though never getting too relaxing. Always keeping the eyes open and the touch of mystery present wherever the music turn.63:16

ISEGRIM
"Isegrim"
LAST EPISODE

This one-man band is playing fast Black Metal in an okay way, but not really making much of a difference. The material is mostly normal and the riffs doesn't bring to mind a feeling of Black Metal or evil, just normal Metal. The production is very clean and I feel that a bit more dirty sound would have given this band a little bit of identity, because that is one of several things this band need. There is no identity over the music, it sounds flat and empty. This mini-CD will not bring you anything new, feels like rehashed middle class Black Metal from central Europe. 25:31

ISHTAR
"Diabolical Hymns"
HAMMERHEART RECORDS

Another new Swedish Black Metal band is showing us what they can offer. This demo has been released on a mini-CD, remastered and limited to 1000 copies as a foretaster to their debut album. It is not a very original band we have to admit, synth, some female vocals, wolves howling to start a song, but what we enjoy is the powerful music and the Black Metal vocals. That is good. As a whole this CD goes through the head without leaving footprints. It has become boring using this balance of Black Metal with grim vocals and cute nice synth and atmosphere in the music. Don't know, as for now this band will drown among the rest, but maybe their debut album will show a stronger side of Ishtar that differs from the typical Black Metal they perform, which we have grown bloody tired of long time ago. 25:00

ISTHAR
"Isthar"

When you have really bad vocals, totally empty music with a total lack of interesting riffs and a production that shows no trace of identity, then I simply put on something else. 18:48

JAMES MURPHY
"Feeding the Machine"
DIEHARD MUSIC

Guitarist James Murphy showing us how good he can play on guitar, the guitar is basically really in the focuspoint here. If you like the albums from Joe Satriani then this could also perhaps be interesting, and if you have a great interest in listening to very skilled musicians this will really show you a brilliant guitarist. But I find this really not my cup of tea, I hate guitarwanking and those kind of things and the material on this one is far too progressive for my taste. 63:39

JESUS MARTYR
"Sudamerican Porno"
REPULSE RECORDS

Jesus Martyr
sudamerican porno

Absolutely the most interesting and good South American band I have heard in ages. This reeks of potential and is an impressive debut album. Heavy and intense with great power and aggression. Thick guitar-walls and varying vocals make this album stand out as something special. Not something one could easily imagine a South American band could come up with, considering what they have produced in Metal during the 90's. Jesus Martyr is an original and very intense band that offers variation within the hammering power and aggression they offer with their music, and this album is for the moments when you want really brain-smashing intensity. 49:21

KILL II THIS
"Deviate"
VISIBLE NOISE

There's no doubt that this British band have mixed together something very interesting. The music's basic bottom is heavy and drifting Metal which in itself sounds good, but what makes it extra nice is the sounds that pop up a little bit lower volumewise than the Metal, some electronic sounds that lift this album up to a level which allow us to repeat the listen more than once. The vocals are more in the vein of angry singing rather than growling or screaming and it works just fine, and the occational female chorus singing add that little, but important, qualityfeeling. The music has a good drive and plenty of groovy and heavy guitarriffs which all in all scores high. The production has the trademark of Napalm Death which is not negative, only increasing the intensity and power. Especially the guitars touches the landmark of Napalm Death, and we would say that if you like the beforementioned group's latest albums then this will also appeal to you, though being more versatile than their countrymates.46:29

LET ME DREAM
"Medley Rain"
SUCCUBUS RECORDS

It's been quiet around this Finnish band since their debut album "My Dear Succubus" release by Adipocere Records. This mini-CD here is touching into the fields of Gothic music, dark Pop and a little touch of Metal, and it is not bad. Nice keyboards carrying the music into more laidback atmospheres. The vocals are dark normal male, and the music is as said before, nicely varied and rich in sound and music. I would think that this music should appeal to those into Gothic Metal and more emotional forms of music. 19:33

the LORD WEIRD SLOUGH FEG
"Twilight of the Idols"
DRAGONHEART

Said to be performing Celtic Epic Metal is this American outfit, but to put it a bit more simple, this is Heavy Metal. And as I am not really a Heavy Metal fan I can't really enjoy this album, but objectively speaking it is a well played album with a clear and light sound. Not very catchy but they have their own style, if that matters in this genre, but if they use this Celtic side of their music to stick out, then it doesn't work that well. It is old news by now anyway. Iron Maiden is a strong inspiration to this band which easily shows. 52:52

MACBETH
"Romantic Tragedie's Crescendo"
DRAGONHEART

If you are looking for a pathetic band with lots of emotional clichés, Macbeth is the band to look for. Pathetic is the only word that pop up in my head, and it is really pathetic. "Nasty" male vocals and beautiful female vocals, hehe, with a little blood on a female hand and a broken rose on a white sheet on the cover of this CD, Theatre of Tragedy, Type O Negative…This is remarkably pathetic…42:53

MACTÄTUS
"Provenace of Cruelty"
NAPALM RECORDS

Mactätus
Provenance of Cruelty

I had quite some expectations for this album, and I have to say that the first two times I listened to it I was extremely disappointed. This because I felt it sounded too polished and too normal. This band, which I have followed with interest as perhaps the only Norwegian band not known that could bring forth something Devilish in their music, was basically a band I hoped would dare to still remain that way. But this album is nevertheless a bit disappointing for my part, though it has the powerful sound and the abyssic vocals, it feels like also they have been tempted to bring in more normal ingredients into their music, maybe an attempt to make it more grand, I don't know. I feel their dark parts are working out great, despite not being original. It has the drive of darkness and the feeling of evil, and the riffs are dark and on the shadowside which is great. But what I didn't especially enjoy was for instance the variation they have forced into the music on the track "Sleepless Souls". Power Metal vocals, sounds too "mature" and too much old Helloween. But it's only that song, the rest of this CD is floating and fast Black Metal with synth, far from being original but still good and entertaining. 45:30

MADDER MORTEM
"Mercury"
MISANTHROPY RECORDS

Madder Mortem could first be heard on Misanthropy via the "Presumed Guilty" compilation released a while ago, and this being the first full CD for the band, they present themselves as a mature and well-balanced group with many good ideas. The opening track is the strongest on the CD, containing a very catchy and contagious melodic focuspoint that moves the heart of music. The vocals are handled by a woman in a nice way, while the music has a touch of sadness they do not become a one-dimensional band in this genre. And that is fortunate, there's already plenty of them and Madder Mortem therefore avoid becoming one of many, but simply stand on their own feet with this album. One might argue that this isn't very original but when it comes to creating an album that is nice to listen to and doesn't touch the cliché traps of Metal they have succeeded with that. The material as a whole holds a rather high quality with both its ups and downs, but it is relaxing and works very nice as background music as well as music to listen to while closing ones eyes. Not album of the year but good above average and nicely constructed and played.51.59

MAELSTROM
"The wings of Time"
METAL PROGRESS RECORDS

This Japanese band perform very melodic and light Heavy Metal in the classic field, not far from Hard Rock at times. It is nicely performed, but lacking something if we compare them with the big names in Heavy Metal, of course. They do however show us some potential and some catchy and nice ideas on this mini. The CD contains 6 tracks and find itself placed among the traditional Heavy Metal bands that are still living with their hearts in the 80's. 22:16

MALEVOLENT CREATION
"Joe Black"
SYSTEM SHOCK

I don't know exactly what kind of release this is, it seems to contain some new songs and then some remixes and demo versions, demo versions from 1990 and 1993. The three first tracks are Malevolent Creation from flesh to bone, while the third song follows in the current evolution of extreme Metal where bands incorporate electronic sounds and beats into the music. "No Salvation", "To Kill" and "Tasteful Agony" have got Metal with electronic beats accompanying them. But after those three experiments we turn back to the brutal and raw Death Metal of Malevolent Creation. 1993 demo version of "Genetic Affliction" leads us into a cover of Slayer, "Raining Blood", as they have called the song, though being miles away from the quality of the original we move over to the last two track, both from 1990. The soundquality here is great demosound, more vital and full of nostalgy. Much more Thrash than the clear Death Metal band we know them to be these days. Good old Deaththrash. 38:17

MALEVOLENT CREATION
"The Fine Art of Murder"
SYSTEM SHOCK

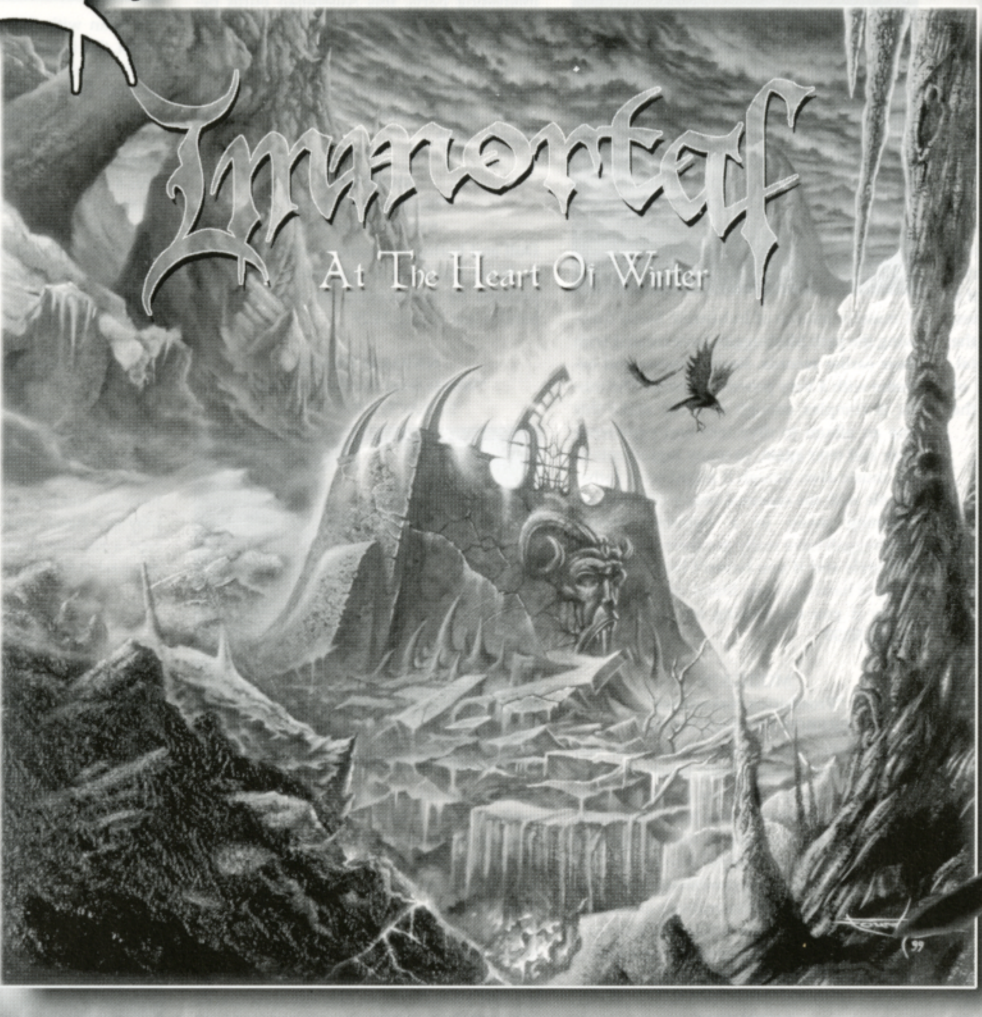
The new album from this American band is a very disappointing affair in my ears. It lacks outrageous aggression and intensity, I don't like the returned Bret Hoffmann voice, the production isn't good and overall I miss those ripping riffs that force me to bang my head. On the other hand Malevolent Creation have been around for many years and never really accomplished anything apart from playing Death Metal all these years, and it seems every time I expect something from a record I get disappointed, and so also with this one. I am bored listening to most of this record, the material have become passive and it doesn't make a difference. Even the fast parts aren't that interesting. Too bad! 56:22

MALEVOLENT CREATION
"Eternal"
SYSTEM SHOCK

Compared to their new album this one here has got a lot sharper and aggressive

ONLY THE MUSIC OF THE TRULY DEDICATED WILL SURVIVE!

Immortal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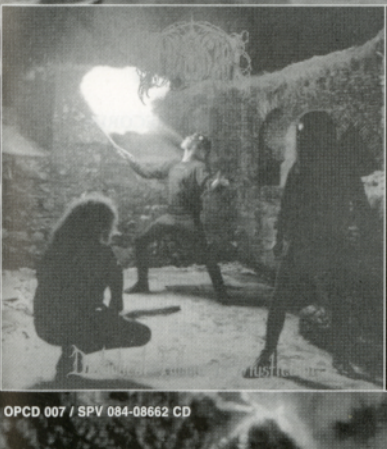

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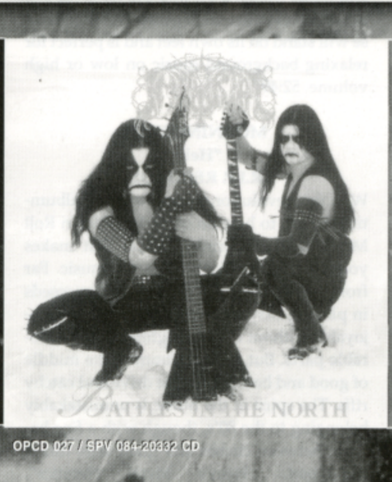
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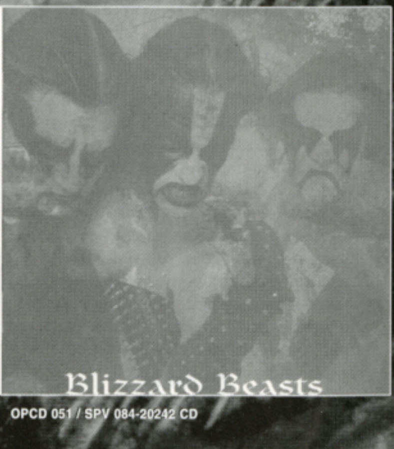
Blizzard Beasts

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VOICES of WONDER

sound, that is good. This mid-priced CD from 1995 shows the Malevolent Creation I want to hear, evil and brutal vocals, lots of riffs and guitars, sharp sound and a great aggression in their fast material. The music really surrounds the mind with the wide production this album has got, really great! There is a lot more forward motion in this album than on their new one, really too bad that this is the development pattern for this band. But this album is quite nice, and at mid-price I would have made sure to get it! 47:17

MANGLED
"Ancient Times"
FADELESS RECORDS

Yeah! Push the volume up and this total blast of intensity will blow off some great power. Both doomy Death Metal and grinding insanity has found its way on this album of incredible power. I would perhaps put it in the Death Metal box but it doesn't matter, this is a quite cool album. Very good sound, many good riffs and a totally intense atmosphere. This debut album is labelled as a Grave Rock album, but I feel this is a lot more Death Metal than anything else. For sure it has the intensity of a great band like Cannibal Corpse at times, then slowing down a bit and entering the more doomy aspect of Metal. Nevertheless, this ripps the skull out of shape and make the foot of Metal bang the floor. 38:03

MARIONETTES
"Carousel"
DARKEND

Nothing new from Marionettes, popish Gothic Metal with emotion. Nicely played but with a lack of energy this is severly dull. I am no Goth freak and therefore care shit about something like this, but honestly speaking I can't see how a Goth freak could be interested in this, as it is old news in every sense. Nothing new, just a stagnated effort. 48:30

MASTER
"Faith is in Season"
PAVEMENT MUSIC

It is easy to overglorify the old bands which have played extreme Metal for many years, and don't do that with Master. The lyrical side of this band seems "positive" and perhaps regretfully even Christian, and that can't be good for anyone. The music in itself isn't that bad, perhaps a bit dry but it has its moments of ripping parts. But I wonder about the songtitles like "Follow Jesus", "We're about to Fall", "Believers have a Choice", is it just like "Jesus Saves" by Slayer? Read the lyrics and check them out, I don't have them. But if we give them the benefit of the doubt, this album is okay and does have a little touch of Lemmy from Motorhead on the vocal side. Musically it could be classified as Death Metal, but it is not a must to have this album. There are plenty of better ones in the Death Metal genre. 53:43

MAZE OF TORMENT
"Faster Disaster"
IRON FIST PRODUCTION

Swedish Deaththrash with a touch of the old style. A good drive over the album with a cool sound and music to bang your head to, and that's not too often we hear nowadays unfortunately. Real punch in the music they play and despite not having that many really good riffs, they have managed to arrange the music in a way that makes it intense and good. The riffs that move your body are here and it is a nice album with aggression and intensity. 31:13

MENHIR
"Buchonia"
ARS METALLI

This band play Pagan Metal, with somewhat Folk music incorporated strongly in the music. Both male and female vocals, though the male being in the front mostly. Nice and harmonic melodies, balancing on the romantic side of music. This mini-CD will give you 4 tracks of soft Folk music and floating melodies, and while most of these type of bands become either too sweet or just boring, this band stand above that. Not excellent but a nice listen. 20:59

MESHUGGAH
"Chaosphere"
NUCLEAR BLAST

MESHUGGAH
CHAOSPHERE

A massive inferno of Industrial Metal following the path Meshuggah have created with their earlier records. Really intense and extreme with a very powerful sound. The music is complex enough to really make this one an album to dive into and experience over and over again, so many ingredients in the music even though it might seem rather simple with the repeated heavy riffs that are churning away in a hypnotic tempo. Meshuggah have really got their own sound and style and if you haven't heard their inferno of harsh and raw Metal, use the opportunity if you are looking for crazy insane Metal. 50:30

MORGAIN
"Frostbitten Nakedness"
EREBOS PRODUCTIONS

Minimalistic, light Doom Metal with sad melodies and a melancholic touch all along the songs. The two different vocals are what makes the melodies in this band, the music has placed itself calmly in the background holding the same tempo throughout the songs. Quite a relaxing combination, also the vocals are a bit out of the ordinary and that is nice. For the moments when you just can't take a lot of noise, plug into this one which is just as much Metal as it isn't. 42:35

MORGION
"Solinari"
RELAPSE RECORDS

An album for those into slow and drifting Metal, profound and intellectual music without becoming over the top in any way. Just a bit doomy in a light way, with a very wide sound. They mark their territory with this strong release within the field of slow and emotional Metal, a bit into the landscape of other bands in the same genre. But this release will stand on its own feet and is perfect for relaxing background music on low or high volume. 52:49

MORNINGSTAR
"Hell"
R.I.P. RECORDS

With this revolutionary and original albumtitle we get to hear an oldstyled Rock'n Roll Metal band performing Metal that makes your Rock'n Roll foot tap to the music. Far from being original, Morningstar succeeds in playing easy to listen to music that is enjoyable without the real highlights or memorable parts. But it is an album in the middle of good and bad with a fine drive and catchy riffs. The spirit in the music is unmistakably belonging to the 80's, though with a fine balance between clichés and good taste this is not bad. "Heavy Metal Heretics", "Maniaxe", "Chainsaw Philosophy" and "The Spirit (of the Bottle)" are some of the songtitles, and though listening to the whole album at once gets a bit boring, some songs are worth picking out and played again. Should appeal to those individuals into the 80's Metal who are not too picky on quality and originality. 44:13

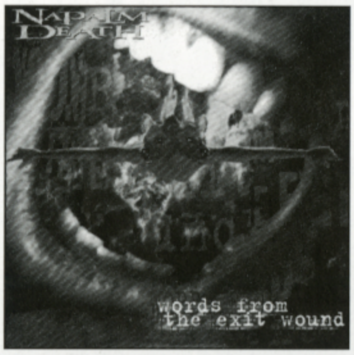
MORTAL SIN
"Revolution of the Mind"
MEGA METAL PRODUCTIONS

With old thrash vocals and a Thrash/Metal sound Mortal Sin comes across as a cool band. A bit old Metallica and a sharp and clear sound with some cool riffs and many interesting parts, this Australian outfit belongs on the classic scale of Thrash Metal. Old Metallica, Megadeth and Anthrax fans should check this one out. It has got power and a great fuzz on the guitars, clear Thrash vocals and a heart in the 80's sound of Thrash. 38:16

MURDER 1
"Shopping for Porn"
SYSTEM SHOCK

Dull and boring Hardcore is what Murder 1 is. Some Hardcore is aggressive and could perhaps be appreciated for that, but this band is just boring.34:29

NAPALM DEATH
"Words from the Exit Wound"
EARACHE RECORDS


NAPALM DEATH
words from the exit wound

Background information on this band is superflous, but I have to say that I enjoy Napalm Death more and more for every new album they release. This one holds a really intense grip on me as I travel through every song. It is hard and harsh, melodic under the musical surface and never predictable despite not being that varied. The vocals goes nicely along with the music and "Words from the Exit Wound" ripps. One can only dream of how they sound live, must be crazy. Metal on the hard side with a great drive and cool riffs and parts, there you have it. Don't overlook this one. 41:10

NARGAROTH
"Herbstleyd"
NO COLOURS RECORDS

After a long and partly unusual intro, this German outfit show us that they can play some ugly Metal, or rather Black Metal one could say. The vocals are grim and the Metal they play unpolished and raw, with more calm sequenzes in between consisting of synth. Their Metal is basically divided in two, one being really fast and slaughtering, the other being more floating and calm, both with really ugly, grim vocals added. And that variation makes this album quite okay, though honestly perhaps not that hot since they don't really bring something new to music, and Black Metal with nice synth isn't exactly shaking either, but the listen is okay without having too much expectations to it. The production is quite rough and that is favourable for the whole impression. 69:43

NAZXUL
"Black Seed"
SHOCK RECORDS

Great sound! Really covering every corner of the brain with this drifting and slow Black Metal, this is great. The vocals are painful and perfectly mixed in with the music, a trip in the devilish fields of Black Metal. The synth is slowly moving alongside the music and creates a great atmosphere, drifting away into the endless darkness with lots of intense parts. This 4 song mini-CD has a perfect mix between the nice drifting atmospheres and the grip Black Metal takes on your soul. Join the darkest nightmare and close your eyes, the Devil is opening the door with lots of great sound and a massive, embracing atmosphere. Recommended! 24:26

NEBULAR MOON
"Mourning"
LAST EPISODE

Very rich sounding (Black) Metal with lots of synth and intense Black Metal vocals. It amaze me to think how little creativity new bands have got and how embarrassing it must be to play in a band, which offer nothing new except a riff that doesn't make a difference in any part of the music. Fucking boring! 49:25

NECROPHAGIA
"Holocausto de la Morte"
RED STREAM

NECROPHAGIA
HOLOCAUSTO de la MORTE

Fuck yeah, listen to those insane vocals!!! This is creepy, real creepy! "Holocausto de la Morte" is the first new CD from this American band for 11 years, and the band still possess that grim, raw and strange feeling of old Death Metal from the gutter. Not polished and not clean, really full of blood and screams. Because this is opening your stumach, lots of insane vocals, creepy riffs and horror feeling. Necrophagia will be your obscure band belonging both to the past as well as the future. 39:48

NEGURA BUNGET
"Zirnindu-Sa"
BREATH OF NIGHT RECORDS

Negura Bunget from Romania is playing raw floating and nice Black Metal with screamy and ugly vocals. The music in itself is rather boring and not that well composed, hardly a good part here during the whole play, only rather simple and not good music that is lying underneath the very dry and annoying vocals. In addition this band is using cute synth which really makes this bad. 37:29

NOCTI VAGUS
"Venture in Sombre Passion"
SOLISTITIUM RECORDS

When the fuck shall this idiotic shit music stop? Who the fuck are the wimps buying this anal fluid, lots of synth, a dull vocalist and the most catchy and unintelligent riffs available in the simplistic mind of the dork, who can't even come up with one new smart idea. And it even doesn't sound good, just totally untalented and lost. Total crap! 53:24

NOCTUARY
"For Salvation…"
LOST DISCIPLE RECORDS

Quite well played ugly Metal, but lacking the good parts that would have made this a rememberable album. Noctuary sounds like most other second hand bands, just fast music with little content, or slower music with little content. They have very "nice" riffs, not aggressive or dark, just "nice". Almost Heavy Metal. This band is lining up in the tremendously long line of bands that are labelled Black Metal but really isn't. Black Metal isn't Heavy Metal cozy riffs alongside ugly vocals! If you have ugly vocals, why not also ugly music? I am tired of all this family friendly input in Metal! 40:26

NOCTURNAL BREED
"No Retreat…No Surrender"
HAMMERHEART RECORDS

I have found the earlier material from this Norwegian Thrash group to be a bit dry and boring, but this is an album I like. Quite intense and straight forward, cool sound and powerful guitars make this an entertaining and moving album. Ripping riffs and Heavy Metal guitarsolos, yeah, there we have Nocturnal Breed. This is their strongest album to date, many nice things to dig, some good riffs, nice vocals, it goes hand in hand and sounds really good, especially with the strong dose of aggression the music has got. 45:14

NUCLEAR TRIBUNAL
"Attack of the Salami…"
POSERSLAUGHTER RECORDS

"Attack of the Salami-smokers from Venus" is a compact and really punching Death/Grind Metal album. Groovy and Grind combined makes it an intense affair, hammering drums crushing. This type of Metal have never been close to sophistication, and Nuclear Tribunal is no different, but there is nothing pathetic about the music, though the lyrical side of the band or at least many of the songs might be interpreted as funny. Songtitles like the titletrack, "I came to shoot your Dicks off" and "666 Dicks" underline that. There are plenty of good drumtempos that signifies Death Metal and the vocals and guitar goes hand in hand with that. No real highlights occure during the CD but it is a straight forward fast and intense album from start till finish. 37:17

OBSCURITY
"Damnations Pride"
SCARLET

This re-mastered old recording is released with a maximum bad timing. I cannot think of a more bad time to release something like this as now, when noone cares. But Obscurity's sound can be said to be the sound of the 80's, the real underground Metal style. 41:16

OBTAINED ENSLAVEMENT
"Soulblight"
NAPALM RECORDS

Unfortunately this Norwegian band is playing Black Metal accompanied with the most nice and emotional piano I have heard in ages. Really wimpy music one could almost be tempted to call it. The music does not go hand in hand with on one side the raw music and then piano and guitarparts that sounds like a dreaming Gothic/Hard Rock band. Severly bad. It all sounds rather messy as well, with many emotional and cute guitarparts. Picture really ugly vocals, cute guitars and piano, and then a Black Metal production. I yawn forever…41:24

ODHINN
"The North Brigade"
NAPALM RECORDS

Really fast Metal, though not being aggressive or brutal really. The production is too passive to achieve that. Odhinn does not stand out in any way really, the material they have put on this album is just too passive and average to make the big difference. And again we wonder where the guiar is since the vocals, synth and drums are very often higher in the production. Also a total lack of good riffs make this album rather uninteresting. 35:12

PAGAN WINTER
"Inferos"
LAST EPISODE

Very intense and fast Black Metal from this German band. However I would like to start with one complaint about this CD, and that is the really bad drumsound. Don't know what it sound like but it doesn't sound like real drums in my ear. Badly mixed one could say. The other thing is the intensity which lacks some aggression, as well as playing this music in the same fast tempo without any really good parts to back it up, makes it boring really fast. Two or three songs are good, but when the fourth comes I quickly loose my interest. I do give them credit for playing this gruesome Black Metal, but with their next album I hope they will do something about the drums, that's the least one could ask for. 33:54

PANZERCHRIST
"Outpost - Fort Europa"
SERIOUS ENTERTAINMENT

The second album from this Danish band is unfortunately going in the wrong direction if you are looking for aggression and insanity. Their first album "Six Seconds Kill" was more aggressive, harsh and violent, this album is more friendly and laidback with a heavy and thick sound. It almost feels as if the members of the band have settled down and gotten a family or something, I was really hoping they could keep up the intensity from their first album, maybe add some more and I am sure the result would have been great. But this album just sounds like so many other ones, Heavy Metal riffs, slow parts, the only thing I like about this album is the vocalist who has got a really distorted sound on his voice. More aggression demanded and less normality, normality is boring! 28:56

PATH OF DEBRIS
"The Eyes of the Basilisk"
SYSTEM SHOCK

Ordinary, typical and standard Death Metal boring as always. Opening this CD with an intro from a movie I suppose, a battlefield where you hear the sword cling and the men die, that's as bad as a cliché can be. The music is of the ordinary standard, overmelodic riffs and a boring vocalist. I turn this off. 38:52

PECCATUM
"Strangling from Within"
CANDLELIGHT

Grand Metal perfomed in the name of art. Sounds pretentious? It's a little complex affair that has come out on CD, with lots of complex things happening during its playingtime. Ihriel and Ihsahn let their voices spring into life in all of its shapes and sounds, underlining the so-called artistic side of the music with all of its intricate twists and turns. Spend a few spins with this disc and let the music structure itself, though this is too much art for my taste. We are talking about Metal with lots of guitars and vocalwork that is constantly crossing the straight line of the Metal. Opera vocals, normal vocals, raw vocals, its a CD that contain a lot of different inputs mixed together into a complex and original result, though far from being good and far from being interesting.43:27

PENETRALIA
"Carpe Noctem…"
LAST EPISODE

If you can't get enough of the more emotional Black Metal bands, well, here is yet another one of them with wedding synth and bla bla bla. Nothing really outstanding but the music is listenable and floating with variation. However I feel this is quite a bit from Black Metal, it is still labelled like that, but there is a lot of normal Metal here, doomy parts, female vocals and ugly vocals. Variation is a keyword. 57:28

PIK
"The Heritage of Past Gods"
MIGHTY MUSIC

If Doom sounds boring I very well agree with that, but this German band with roots in Poland is making a doomish Metal album that becomes an interesting affair. Really heavy sound and a key bottom rhythm which makes it really easy to get into the music and dig it. It has its fair share of parts which go by like nothing has happened, but to be involved with the Doom genre this band is good. A very small touch of old Candlemass might be spotted if you listen carefully, and the clear vocals of mr. vocalist is nice. But what makes this album good is the heavy sound and the clear instruments. Hopefully their potential is not reached yet, some more riffs that will stand out will hopefully be on the reportoaire on the next album, but if the Doom genre have bored you lately, check this out. 53:15

POISON THE WELL
"Distance only makes the Heart…"
GOOD LIFE RECORDINGS

Hailing from Florida and bringing us Hardcore/Metal in a powerful and intense way, yepp, that's what this band is doing! And I am no expert on Hardcore, nor do I care, but this album is listenable. Quite light yet heavy and intense angry vocals and changing between mid-tempo to fast parts. 5 songs on this mini-CD is entertaining if you are into Edgemetal, Hardcore or plain Metal in general. 16:20

POSTMORTEM
"Repulsion"
MORBID RECORDS

This German band have really got their own way of playing Death Metal in a very untypical Death Metal manner. Quite groovy and relaxing but at the same time having intensity and power. Very clear production and sharp sound together with quite interesting music makes this listen quite enjoyable without taking off for real. The music is mostly mid-tempo without killer Death Metal riffs but with a more classic Metal structure. 65:40

PROMETHEAN
"Somber Regards"
AVANTGARDE MUSIC

Classified as progressive Folk music with a dark mood, very laidback and tame. Some interesting ideas pop up here and there, but if you can't stand very nice and lightful music, forget this one. Honestly I find this really boring, boring vocals and very passive music that never really makes it more than just as background music at maximum. 41:29

PUNISHER
"Disillusioned"
CONFUSION RECORDS

Bay Area is our next stop when American Punisher show us some Thrash explosions. They're a little bit in the vein of Sadus when it comes to controlled complex structures in the music. One could even go as far as to say it is intelligent Thrash, but that's a bit cheesy, but one thing is for sure, this is a very fine and deep album. It has the punch of sharp Thrash and the bottom of years of experience in Metal. The music also grows the more you play the disc, and combined with the power and lots of sounds it is a good investment for the Thrash-heart. Lots of guitars, heavy drums and the sound of Punisher only. 50:15

RESURRECTURIS
"Nocturnal"
DIAMONDS RECORDS INT.

This Italian band is difficult to place into one specific genre, they mix together elements of Thrash, Death and perhaps Atmospheric music, but unfortunately the result is very passive and boring. Yet another band with empty music that doesn't change a thing, and we have enough of those one could easily say. Some nice riffs and original ideas appear here, though listening to the whole CD makes you hope for something better next time around. 43:18

REVEAL
"Through the Eye of Perfection…"
GOOD LIFE RECORDINGS

Hardcore with really ugly and screamy vocals. Musically speaking this Dutch band is solidly planted in Hardcore, and the distance to Metal is not far. Some riffs are cool and there is a nice drive in the music though the vocals are really ruining the harmonic side to it. There is an angry feeling over the music which to me is Hardcore, and combined with some intros this is one of the better Hardcore CD's I have heard, taking into consideration that this genre means nothing to me. 39:16

ROK
"This is Satanik"
OSMOSE PRODUCTIONS

ROK, well known for his main band Sadistik Exekution, the incredible band from Australia. This time he has gone solo, though brought with him some musicians to play on this dirty Rock'n Roll-Metal album. Rotten music, old Heavy Metal feeling and lots of noise, that's what ROK is all about. A little bit of Driller Killer, a little of Motorhead and a little of Sadistik Exekution, though I feel dirty Rock'n Roll Metal is an okay description. Many cool riffs and cool vocals enable this album to be original and fresh without really being that. It is basically a sick record and if you like it dirty, I recommend this one, far from the landscape of commercial Metal. 31:15

SADISTIK EXEKUTION
"Sadistik Elektrokution"
SHOCK RECORDS

Fuck yeah, intense and chaotic insanity from the Sadistors. A little Rock'n Roll and a lot of Metal and there you have this 3 track disc. Intense vocals and lots of sound, this disc opens with the title track, a bastard mix. Continues with the totally insane "Voltage by Sadism" in a furious tempo, total carnage. The last track shows Dave Slave goes mental on "Mental Bass", totally in the insane level. 8:43

SAD LEGEND
"Sad Legend"
HAMMERHEART PRODUCTIONS

If you expected some sad Doom or extremely emotional music as I did, you are in for a little surprise! This band kick off with a very intense and sharp melodic form of Metal. With raw vocals and a clear and melodic sound they have produced a nice debut album. The sound is really wide and thick, while the music is played nicely in the melodic field of Metal. The rich sound makes up for many of the empty and emotional parts in their music, while some female vocals are nicely incorporated into the music making it nicer and more full. The band can be found in the classic Metal genre with drifting music and raw, hard vocals. Or in other words, atmospheric Black Metal. 40:04

SALEM
"A Moment of Silence"
BNE

One thing is for sure, you are not in for a moment of silence with this album. After having released a couple of albums for Morbid Records in Germany, Salem have now signed with their national label, though how that affects the availability of this one in Europe is something I have no idea about. But with this album I feel that they have left the Death Metal genre that I once felt they belonged to, it is more feeling in the music as well as having a touch of the Greek riffs in their music, but to make it clear, this band is from Israel. The music they perform is very well put together and shows a very mature and confident band than ever before. Though the music is not fast it has got a solid and heavy drive that makes it nice, and if you are not fond of aggressive music all the time this one is nice. I would almost say that they have a more plain Metal style now, should appeal more to fans of Tiamat or Rotting Christ than to fans of Deicide to put it that way. Good melodies and a relaxing atmosphere, "A Moment of Silence" offer many nice parts and as a whole the album is entertaining. Produced by the well known Colin Richardson who has set his mark on this nicely produced album. 59:12

SARCASM
"A Touch of the Burning Red Sunset"
BREATH OF NIGHT RECORDS

Underground Death Metal is what this Swedish band is playing. Without highlights like brilliant riffs and aggression, Sarcasm becomes too light for my taste of Death Metal, but this album is quite well-played and nicely arranged despite the material not being of the finest quality. Many extremely boring long parts where nothing of interest is happening at all, and then something a little better opens the eye, but honestly speaking this is a Death Metal release lacking identity and power. 41:27

SATARIEL
"Lady Lust Lilith"
PULVERISED RECORDS

Very typical and empty Death/Black Metal with the usual Swedish styled Death Metal riffs. Really kind in other words. The sound on this disc is quite powerful, but as long as the music remains uninteresting and very predictable throughout the whole CD then I'm out of the picture as a listener. It is very typical and below average music I would say, but if you cannot get enough of second rate Swedish sounding, partly emotional, Death Metal, feel free to give it a listen. 50:47

SATURNUS
"For the Loveless Lonely Nights"
EUPHONIOUS RECORDS

4 new tracks and two livetracks, that is what Saturnus have decided to give us this time around, while they are working on their new album. It is very well-played Gothic/Doom Metal with a nice feeling and emotion. Powerful, yet light and melodic. The material is sad and beautiful, carried forward by the nerve of melancholy. Longing feelings will open themselves in the music of Saturnus. Beware, if you enjoy melancholic Metal, Saturnus is a step above the overemotional and overmelodic trash. 35:59

SATYRICON
"Intermezzo II"
MOONFOG PRODUCTIONS

Can't you bear the thought that Summer will pass without the new Satyricon album "Rebel Extravaganza" being in your hands, there's no reason for total despair. This mini-CD is a fresh foretaster containing a new song from the forthcoming Satyricon album. It opens this mini-CD and shows Satyricon in a little new shape, but still with the great basis from "Nemesis Divina". The aggression and speed is still here, the great riffs and passages are lifting up the music as it did in the past, and the vocals are great. No repetition here, Satyricon is always a step ahead of boredom. A raw as Hell version of Sarcofago's "Inri" blows your hair in all directions, before well-known tones spit you in the face, in the shape of a different mix of the "Nemesis Divina" song. Then we head for the more calm area, with a calm yet fierce mid-paced song, before we are all forced to push the button again after this disc ends off. Can't wait for the new album, can you? 20:52

SCATTERED REMNANTS
"Destined to Fail"
REPULSE RECORDS

Real raw and underground Death Metal is what Scattered Remnants managed to record before they broke up. I am not really sure whether I will miss their presence in the Death Metal genre either, because I find this album to be very flat and one-dimensional. It has all been done before and since I have listened to Death Metal for a number of years, this isn't really something to fall out of the chair of. All the riffs sound more or less the same, and the dry and flat production really doesn't lift the interest in the music. I am sorry, but this was a disappointment. 31:40

SCEPTER
"I'm going to Hell"
MERCILESS RECORDS

More basic Heavy Metal from this American trio. Heavy sound and classic Metal goes hand in hand, and this album is quite decent without really being great. The music is cool to listen to and it has its own touch without being original to an obvious extend. The drumsound is really cool on this album, but if we would classify this album one could say they draw musical influence from the 80's, with an up to date mind. 31:54

SCHOLOMANCE
"A Treatise on Love"
THE END RECORDS

It might be unique, but my god Satan what a fucking boring album! Symphonic, yes, unusual, yes, but it doesn't really give me a listening experience of music. I really don't know, just to me it lacks that forward motion in music, the parts you can really dig, really get into. This is for those who read Hamlet instead of cartoons, and once again I have to point out that the rawer vocals on this album is beyond dry and dull. 50:49

SCRIPTORIS IRAE
"Black Sun Shining"
MIGHTY LEGEND PRODUCTIONS

Gruesome! Horrible female vocals, lame music and bad ideas put together in a pathetic mix of Metal and unintelligence that lack originality and creativity to the maximum. The vocalists should spend some more time baking cakes and spend a millennium in the rehearsalroom. Horrible! 38:31

the SECOND MOON
"The Second Moon"
OSKOREI PRODUCTIONS

With an overdone amount of keyboards this Norwegian band make me fall asleep. Very messy with all these fucking whatever keyboards, and even though this band doesn't use them in the usual floating and cute way it really doesn't sound interesting. It sounds messy and not really good. This seems to be a one-man band performing Metal with lots of fairytaleish synth. 22:05

SETH
"Les Blessures de l'Ame"
SEASON OF MIST

It says; Seth's goal is to create the most majestic Black Metal! Puke! What about aggressive Black Metal, what the fuck is wrong with Devilish Black Metal, why does it have to be majestic, cute, synthbased shit Metal? And this is supposed to be France's most extreme Black Metal band? Sure it is a lot easier to play Hard Rock Black Metal but why not dig deep inside the black heart for the Devil? Compared to BLACK METAL this sounds like Jan Werner at his worst! This even doesn't sound evil, it sounds warm and inviting. I turn in my grave already today. But if you can stand yet another band stripped for identity and power, with cute synthparts and a minimum of aggression, sure, I will puke on your hair. The opening of track 2 is a rip off of Dimmu Borgir and they even sing in the romantik language of French. I give up…46:48

SINISTER
"Aggressive Measures"
NUCLEAR BLAST

In your face Death Metal is the result of the fourth full-length CD from this Dutch band. But apart from being rather aggressive and raw, which is really great, it really never takes off. It keeps its feet firmly planted on the ground, and that is too bad. But it is good above average Death Metal, really intense and powerful walking in the traditional Death Metal genre. 31:05

the SINS OF THY BELOVED
"Lake of Sorrow"
NAPALM RECORDS

I have no respect for boring emotional Metal bands with nasty male vocals and cute female vocals. Just really boring I have to say. This musicstyle has become old news in my ears, but objective reviews…well, they do try one could say. Violins…no, that's not new. Really, I can't see anything great about this, just yet another band in this emotional genre. 54:47

SIX STRING SUICIDE
"Piss Around the World"
IRON PALM PRODUXIONS

I really don't like this band. Something like a Metalcore/Hardcore band playing powerful Metal, though with really bad choruses and a monotonous and quite uninteresting vocalist. Not any cool riffs either I have to admit, and nothing special to make this band something else apart from a dustcollector.

SKYCAMEFALLING
"…to forever Embrace the Sun"
GOOD LIFE RECORDINGS

Debut album from these Amercian Hardcore/Metal dudes. The sound is heavy and powerful, great drive and intensity. To me it sounds a little more Metal than Hardcore but as long as it is aggressive, a little bit insane and raw I'm in! 7 songs of raw edgemetal you could perhaps say, with melodic themes and quite a few tempochanges. Not bad to be linked with Hardcore! 27:51

SKYFORGER
"Kauja pie Saules"
MASCOT RECORDS

The uncommercial and individual sound of Eastern Europe shines through in Skyforger, and that is great. The Metal they perform on their debut album is powerful, and vocally it reminds me of old Master's Hammer. The only thing I can't relate to is the occational Folk music they incorporate on this disc, but the Metal makes up for that. They make the music move forward in a nice way, they have got okay riffs, a good powerful sound and drive in the music which make it easy to enter. You can hear the late 80's spirit in the music but it sounds like the late 90's nevertheless and that is good. Skyforger could easily be linked to the wide genre Black Metal is today, but Metal in itself should be a definition good enough. They have moved steps forward from their latest demo, and show us that individual creativity in Metal is much more fruitful than the current Black Metal ideal. I like Master's Hammer and also this band, but I wish they could have dropped out the Folk inspiration. The past has been covered for years, look forward to the grim horizon. 40:22

SOILENT GREEN
"Sewn Mouth Secrets"
RELAPSE RECORDS

Intensity and tempo changes is a frame around this disc. Much appreciated is the massive sound and insane aggression that this album brings forth. Soilent Green brings together raw Death/Grindish Metal with occational groovy riffs and a furious speed that blasts the drumchannels. It is quite versatile, but an essential keyword is intensity and lots of sound. Heavy drums and guitars and good raw vocals. Count this album to your collection of aggressive music…45:48

SOLITUDE AETURNUS
"Downfall - Through the Darkest Hour"
PAVEMENT MUSIC

Groovy and doomy Metal is brought to us in a slow way with normal male vocals. This double CD, where we have rewieved the "Downfall" part, will appeal to Heavy Metal fans who enjoy the music a bit slow as well as the traditional Doom fans. But I do feel the album is very empty, it is just music, nothing else that is really profound or moving, but on the other side, I am the opposite of a Doom fan. 44:36

SOLSTICE
"New Dark Age"
MISANTHROPY RECORDS

Doomy and slow Metal are the ingredients on this disc, and though I have little interest in this type of music they play well though very passive for my taste. You find a little development from their earlier material but still sounding as they have done since I first heard them on the "Lamentations" (Candlelight) CD. The vocals are melancholic normal male, and musically some glimpses of early Paradise Lost might appear in the longing musical soundscape they have built up. 66:07

SORTSIND
"Sår"

Black Metal the ugly way alright! Quite chaotic one could say, and not a highlight exactly. Maybe six years ago one could have had a bit more interest in this type of music, but today it is both boring and uninteresting. This Danish band isn't offering something new with the music, and as they don't have the essential great riffs or feeling in the music just isn't worth the time. 51:46

SOULSEARCH
"Abred vs. Annwn"
SERENADES RECORDS

The fourth album from Soulsearch is a Metal album with Doom tendencies and some Folk influences. Quite powerful and melodic without the melodies of exceptional quality but neutrally placing itself as an album in between the good and the bad ones. At parts this album has got a good drive, but for my taste it often sinks down into music that in my ears make no difference. If you are curious about Folk music in Metal, a little dash of Wave, then maybe this one could appeal to you. 52:41

RAVEN MUSIC

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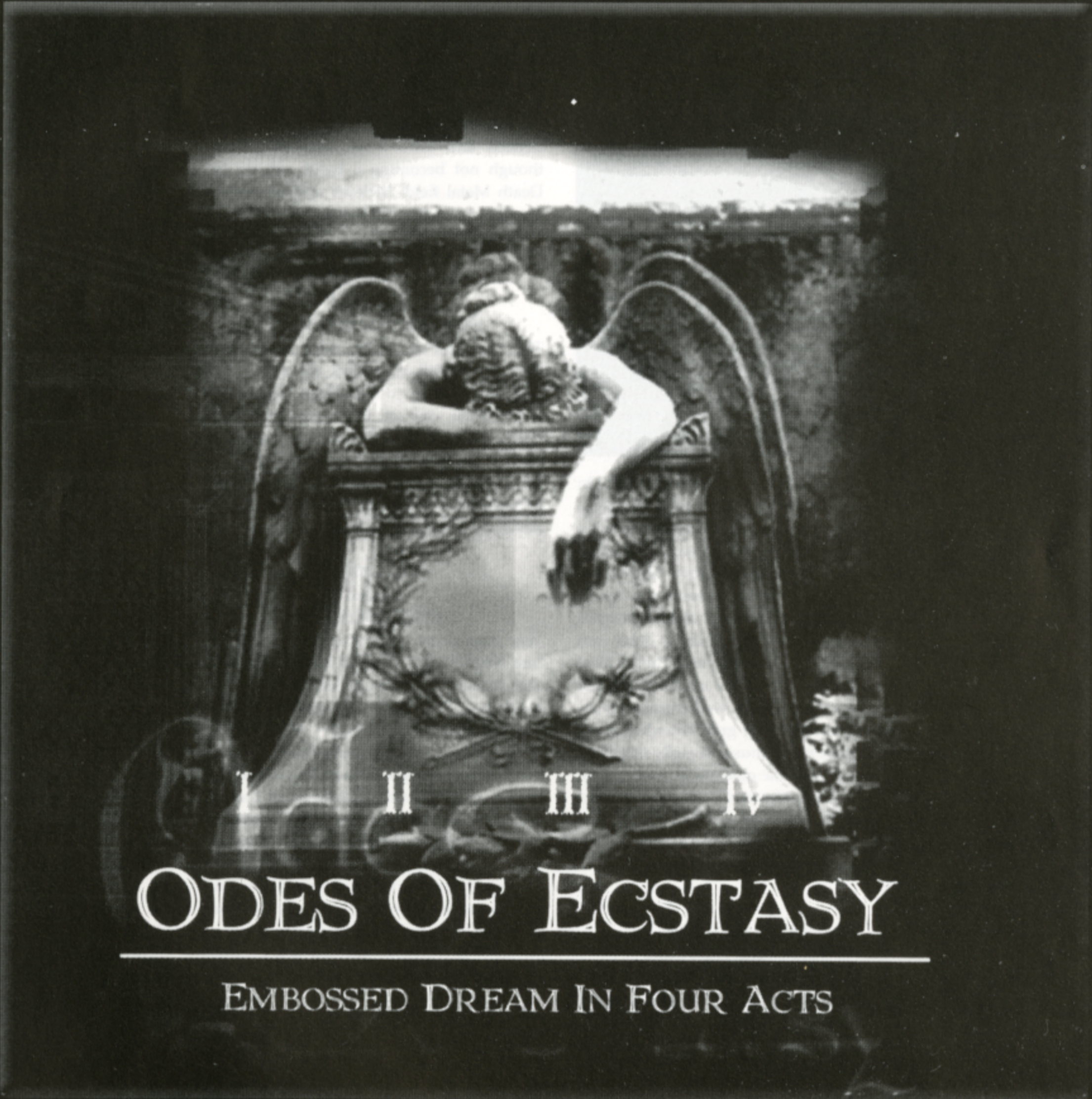
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SUTCLIFFE JUGEND
"When Pornography is no longer enough"
DEATH FACTORY

This is simply sick and insane. Extreme electronic music, lots of noise, sick vocals screaming, insane lyrics hitting you in the face. One could discuss whether this is music or not, the only thing I am sure about is that this is insane. Sutcliffe Jugend is one of the few bands within the genre Power Electronics that I have heard of, and it is even sicker than I thought. Lots of noise, insane vocals and a cold and evil atmosphere. Not for the normal soul. 34:07

TAAKE
"Nattestid..."
WOUNDED LOVE RECORDS

When the leading Norwegian bands who earlier strictly belonged to the Black Metal genre unashamedly are starting to sound more and more like a South European wedding orchestra, it is a relief to experience that some of the smaller and less known Norwegian bands can make uncommercial and good Black Metal without having to be original. If you too are dead bored and tired of the pathetic bands using overly grim vocals and an overdose of shitty melodic kind music, then I support you. Taake, previously known as Thule, is not one of those bands, and despite of being quite melodic and using a small dose of synth, it doesn't sound inviting and it doesn't sound kind. These seven tracks belong in the Black Metal field and without being very original they don't repeat things done earlier and that makes this album one of the better Black Metal albums out of Norway for a while. And even though that might not make much sense these days, the album is well worth the investment if you enjoy this kind of music. 42:03

TAETRE
"Out of Emotional Disorder"
DIEHARD MUSIC

The second album from Taetre offer again Death Metal, melodic and nicely produced. But nothing that stands out really. It is very traditional even though they have some good ideas that work out fine on this album. One could perhaps place them in the Swedish Death Metal field, and they are also from Sweden, but that will be a bit on the side. The riffs are a little bit more Metal, the arrangements are not typical Death Metal and the melodies are not overcute either. But all in all it gets a bit boring, even though it has its strong sides. 37:09

TENHI
"Hallavedet"
PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS

This Finnish band is to be found on the very emotional, atmospheric side of music connected to Metal. Slow, drifting, nice, bright and a bit melancholic. A tear in the shape of a windbreeze. Tenhi performs 2 tracks of this kind, and it makes the body relaxed and the mind taking a vacation. Just nice harmonic sounds shaping the music.15:46

THALARION
"Tales of the Woods..."
MIGHTY MUSIC

What strike me immediately is the very thick and sharp sound, and when the material in itself isn't that hot the power of the sound helps it a bit. This band from Slovakia have produced a melodic and well-played album that has its links in the emotional Metal field with several inputs from different genres. The vocals are changing from normal dark male, to screamy vocals and then some females vocals as well. The keyboards give the music a nice little touch of melody while mostly the music is a bit empty, but as mentioned, the album can be enjoyed due to the sound which makes it heavy and powerful. The music is difficult to label as it changes from emotional slow Metal to fast, almost Black Metal sounding. Though we clearly enjoy the slower parts a lot more than the uninteresting harder parts of this CD, we feel that this CD nevertheless does not have strong enough material to make a difference in the massive amount of Metal on the market. 53:16

the THIRD MOON
"Aquis Submersus"
NAPALM RECORDS

Incredibly thin and boring Metal that does not have a glimpse of quality. Just mediocre and dull material that has no roots in interesting music, just lame and crappy. 50:12

THORNS VS. EMPEROR
"Thorns vs. Emperor"
MOONFOG PRODUCTIONS

THORNS
EMPEROR

The magic of Thorns is finally unleashed. On this CD which they share with Emperor, some of the old classics are neatly recorded and added strange and unusual twist, yet still remaining raw and creepy. Satyr's vocals add the extra touch of eeriness to the already eerie Thorns material, and this is again a release from Moonfog to really delve into and explore. Both Emperor and Thorns have created music far from the normal field, and this is very refreshing as well as uniquely interesting. Lots of really great sounds that are put together in the music, it really emphasize the quality of the material in a great way. Both being experimental, yet still having a sharp raw power underneath it all. Do you want something original and great at the same time? Direct your attention to this CD. 48:49

THROES OF DAWN
"Dreams of the Black Earth"
WOODCUT RECORDS

The combination of melodic, soft, at parts symphonic Metal with easy Black Metalish vocals is no success and is another tired attempt in bringing Metal into Dull City. The vocals are without any original aspects, just another boring band having a boring vocalist that dries out the interest from the music. Removing the vocals from the music it would perhaps appeal to 40 year old Heavy Rock fans who are dreaming of the lost days, and ruined with soft riffs and no aggression, together with the lack of identity in the vocals, Throes of Dawn makes no difference to the mind of extreme Metal.44:59

THYRANE
"Black Harmony"
WOODCUT RECORDS

This album is very much inspired by Satyricon, and for a new fan interested in Black Metal I have no problems imagining that this album will be appreciated quite a lot. It has got parts of the drive and sound of "Nemesis Divina", and together with melodic and catchy riffs this album has turned out quite good. Not very original though, but sticking out as well executed and interesting Black Metal with power and feeling. This recording was originally a demo but has been released as Thyrane's debut album. Their second album should be out in the near future and if they can continue their well-written music and a little bit more Thyrane identity, I am sure that the next release from this band will be a small highlight. As a debut album this is impressive, compared to the standards of today.35:12

TRAUMA
"Daimonion"
PAGAN RECORDS

Traditional Death Metal with a little touch of original ideas, that what this CD from Polish Trauma contain. The music is quite entertaining, powerful, always moving forward, and combined with Death Metal riffs and some more nicer ones this album became an okay listen. They do their thing well and have put together an album basically divided in two. Half of this one is new material and the other half is older material released on a cassette years back. Trauma is alongside Vader the longest existing Death Metal band from Poland, and it sounds as they are experienced and dare to do something new though not becoming a band outside the Death Metal field. Melodic and interesting Death Metal, withouth that extra aggression. 43:27

TUNRIDA
"Hierarchy"
SOLISTITIUM RECORDS

The total lack of quality, new ideas, good parts, good riffs is striking me in the face every time I listen to this album. Track 4 has a riff from one of the songs of "Dark Medieval Times" from Satyricon, and this shit is really bad. Slow emotional Black Metal, where have I heard that before? Must be something really new and something really good, haha! This stinks. 40:11

TWILIGHT
"Legend"
ARISE RECORDS

Very inspired by Helloween and a little by Iron Maiden, this Spanish band easily present themselves a few division under these two bands. They really try to play on most of the cliché's and typical Heavy Metal strings available, and they succeed which make the listen boring and give us a feeling of bad taste. It's just too much Helloween in the vocals, using the same notes and with melodies and lyrics which doesn't stand by themselves, this album gets a bit humorous. Helloween might not be the worst band to get inspiration from, but I thought everybody could differ between inspiration and cheap copying. Also the vocalist is trying too hard and exceeds his vocal limits. 54:55

UNJUST
"Thin Line Emotions"
MASCOT RECORDS

Very American I have to say! Angry Metal with Thrash and Hardcore elements, a bit groovy, a bit aggressive. "Thin Line Emotions" doesn't really stick its head out in the light, it never really becomes something more than just the normal Metal band that sounds American. Fans of Hardcore and normal Thrash should check it out. 46:35

the UNKINDS
"Violence is a Girl's best Friend"
KRON-H

Punk'n Roll, the light way. Do you like Offspring or some of those bands, check this one out. Easy melodies and sunshine vibes, that's the Unkinds! 34:47

URGEHAL
""Massive Terrestrial Strike"
NO COLOURS RECORDS

This Norwegian band have patiently stayed in the shadow for some years, playing uncommercial and raw Black Metal from the first demo they released. They have now reached their second album and it has the soul of Black Metal with some Thrash elements lurking around the corner. Gives me some of the glorious and dark feeling the first few years of Norwegian Black Metal created, and this is ugly and rude. Simplistic and great riffs coming together with the creepy tempo changes, from fast to mid-tempo, then leading us up to fast again. This is great! The older evil feeling surrounding the music, grim vocals with, at times, echo. They also use the synth very seldomly and at the right parts, and that lifts the atmosphere an extra inch. Don't overlook this album, great Black Metal far from the commercial landscape and with a minimum of catchy melodies. This is what I die for! 36:45

USURPER
"Skeletal Season"
NECROPOLIS RECORDS

The second full-length CD from these American orginalities is a massive dose of Metal, with awkward riffing and a real heavy bottom to the music. I'm really into this album, it has got a great drive and lots of very interesting and original aspects without becoming pretentious or out of shape in any way. This is Metal, with links to Celtic Frost I would say. Especially on the vocalside, but also in the feeling much of the music has got, and that is only meant as a compliment. There is a prsence of something truly unique on this album, and the somewhat eerie feeling it has got further underline the feeling of unique music. The real slow, almost slimy (!), riffs are really working out perfectly in the music, and despite not being catchy it is really a great album to listen to. Really serious music with a certain feeling of the older days, but more importantly, this is very up to date and good. 40:55

V/A
"A Collection of Darkness"
EUPHONIOUS RECORDS

Here you have each band on this label with some or one songs each. My favourite band on this label must be Stiff Miners which have got one song here, but in addition to them you also have bands like Saturnus, Withering Surface, Gigandhi, Furious Trauma and more. A nice variety of Metal in many shapes, from brutal Death Metal to melodic and light Doom Metal. Highlights: Stiff Miners, Gigandhi, Furious Trauma!

V/A
"Born to Walk Against the Wind"
LOUD'N PROUD RECORDS

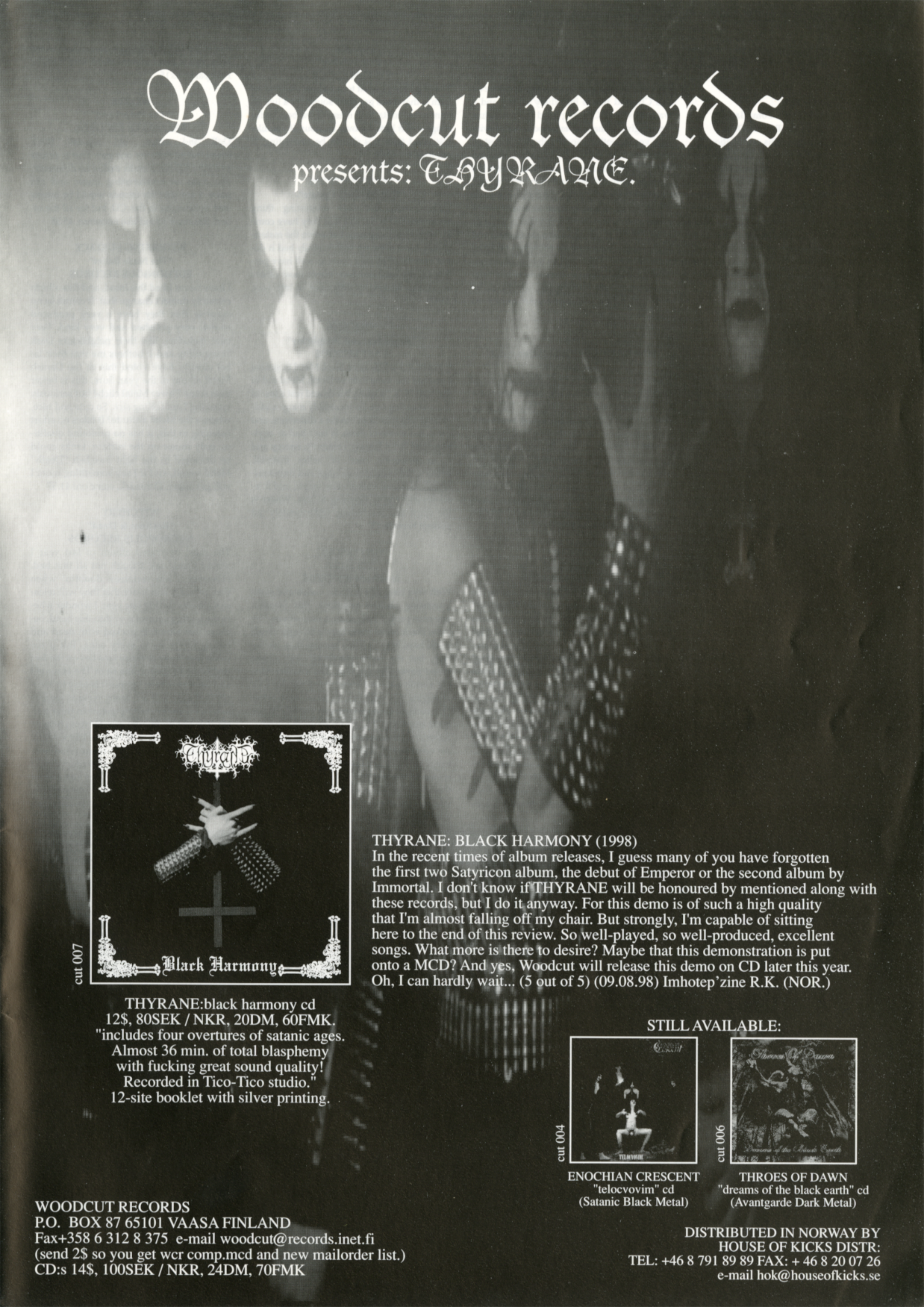
A compilation CD hosting Swedish Heavy/Power Metal and Thrash acts. 14 tracks all in all where my favourite band is Corporation 187 which is ending this disc with their two tracks of aggressive Thrash. The other songs here are mostly well-played and melodic though perhaps not standing out that much. And the Swedish Isengard that are on this CD must not be mistaken for the great Norwegian band, otherwise you are in for a little surprise! The bands contributing are Morifade, Seven, Thornclad, U.N. IT and Sobre Nocturne, maybe bands for the future of melodic Heavy Metal? 61:29

V/A
"Candlelight Collection volume 2"
CANDLELIGHT RECORDS

As you probably understand, this compilation CD presents some of the Candlelight bands with one or two songs each. Here you will find tracks from Opeth, Dawn of Dreams, Absurdus, Cultus Sanguine, Elegeion, Fatal Embrace and Daeonia. Musically speaking Opeth is the clear highlight, but if you are interested in checking out this English label why not do it this way? 67:38

V/A
"Metal Injection"
BAD POSTURE RECORDS

"Metal Injection" is a solid dose of classic Heavy Metal, forget about the 21st century. The inspiration for these bands must be Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Judas Priest and so on. All the bands on this CD sounds okay to be classic Heavy Metal bands, but nothing



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THYRANE: BLACK HARMONY (1998)
In the recent times of album releases, I guess many of you have forgotten the first two Satyricon album, the debut of Emperor or the second album by Immortal. I don't know if THYRANE will be honoured by mentioned along with these records, but I do it anyway. For this demo is of such a high quality that I'm almost falling off my chair. But strongly, I'm capable of sitting here to the end of this review. So well-played, so well-produced, excellent songs. What more is there to desire? Maybe that this demonstration is put onto a MCD? And yes, Woodcut will release this demo on CD later this year. Oh, I can hardly wait... (5 out of 5) (09.08.98) Imhotep'zine R.K. (NOR.)

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more. 10 different rather unknown bands parttake with one song each to fulfill this CD of classic Metal. 45:56

V/A
"No Colours Records Compilation"
NO COLOURS RECORDS

Filled to the maximum is this compilation, offering Metal from the more drifting and Epic or emotional to ugly and rude Black Metal, all with the underground spirit inside, and that feels nice. Some unreleased songs from Abyssic Hate and Absurd plus some unmixed and demosongs from various of the other bands. And if you are not familiar with what this German label have got we can name Vele,s Sorcery, Minotaur, Graveland, Hellfire and Falkenbach as some of them. 15 track are to be found here for a special low price in the shops. 73:43

V/A
"Overload"
DWELL RECORDS

This tribute album to Metallica mostly peeps back to what this band have done of earlier classic songs, taken from their albums "Kill'em All", "Ride the Lightning", "Master of Puppets", "...and Justice for All". I really have to pick out my old Metallica stuff, they ruled once! This CD is mostly inhabited with unknown bands like From the Depths, Diesel Machine, Prototype, Fongus and Fist to name some of them. Not exactly Sepultura or Korn, but the songs are okay. Nothing special really, just normal coverversions. Listen to the original stuff if you enjoy that, this is not a must. 62:40

V/A
"Roadkill"
SYSTEM SHOCK

This Death Metal compilation will offer you most of the bands that System Shock and Pavement Music have got to offer. And what do you say about bands like Vader, Malevolent Creation, Internal Bleeding, HatePlow and more. Lots of Death Metal here and mostly we are dealing with the more brutal style as well. But basically we have every aspect of Death Metal here, even Doom with Solitude Aeternus, and trust me, if you enjoy brutal Metal and haven't got the material from Vader, Malevolent creation and the other bands on System Shock and Pavement, I will recommend you this nice compilation CD which you will find in the stores at mid-price. 53:05

V/A
"Saerpe Metal Union"
SCARLET

Four Norwegian bands are taking up space on this CD, and this is incredibly boring and a waste of sound. Opening band Infernal is just amazingly ordinary overmelodic Metal with ugly vocals, nothing special about this, just an overwhelming amount of uncreative riffs and boring parts. Total waste. Sunshine's Gone is a more primitive Metal band than Infernal, and despite not sounding that bad they have made the music more boring than necessary with a blurry production. Soul Transition is a classic Heavy Metal band with sharp production and ugly vocals. Boring music though. Last band is Con Anima, which lead us into more emotional ground. Original vocals together with mid-tempo Metal. But honestly, you should be very rich before you invest your money on this CD.

V/A
"The Gothic Rock Compilation vol. 2"
DARKEND

This is Gothic music from start to finish, emotional, romantic and a little dark. I am not a Goth fan but this isn't all that bad. Nice for a listen or two with some interesting bands and songs. Some of the bands you find here are Inkubus Sukkubus, The Tortured, Suspiria, Corpus Delicti, Die Laughing, Funhouse and many more. A couple of exclusive tracks from The Tortured, Stone 588 and Emma Conquest while most of the other songs are taken from various albums. Do you enjoy Goth? Maybe you'll like this double CD! 54:45 + 61:09

VADER
"Kingdom"
SYSTEM SHOCK

6 songs plus a CD-ROM track containing the "Incarnation" song, that is what "Kingdom" is all about. Apart from the last two tracks this is Vader as we know them to sound. Fast and ripping Death Metal with a brutal and clear sound. Compulsory banging! "Creatures of Light and Darkness", "Breath of Centuries", "Kingdom" and "Anamnesis" bring forth the fist of Death Metal, but the two last tracks are remixes and entering the electronic field, that is what Vader have chosen to do. Both songs are rather interesting without taking off for real. Both perfectly listenable and having a good, heavy bottom to them, mixing Metalguitars with beats. Many interesting ideas in both songs though they could have been a lot better, but it's a nice ending to this disc.

VADER
"Live in Japan"
SYSTEM SHOCK

The only thing I want to say about this live album is that it has got good sound for a live album to be, containing many of the best Vader songs and it lasts for over an hour. If you like this band then this should be interesting, if not forget it. 61:35

VAGUE EMPRESS
"Genetic Code Update"

Unfortunately, the only interesting thing about this CD is the fact that they have come up with something new, but when the material they have come up with is really bad it doesn't matter, then they could as well have performed the total ordinary music most others are doing. Makes no difference in any way. 20:17

VILKATES
"Angeldust and Blasphemy"
LAST EPISODE

It has been a while since Black Metal in genera l reached the same field as Death Metal did in the early 90's. So many bands and just a few of them standing out. So incredibly many middle-class acts that didn't make a difference, and this band is one of them. It isn't bad or anything, just lacks fantasy, creativity, energy and is in desperate need of better material. Because this is just too average and uninteresting Black Metal without any magic, and it feels severly empty listening to this. Where is the spirit and the feeling, unfortunately not present here. 38:18

VINTERSORG
"Till Fjälls"
NAPALM RECORDS

With very clear and melodic vocals and some interesting musical solutions, this Swedish one-man project have done a nice album. The more Black Metal parts here with ugly vocals could have been avoided because they are boring, but the more emotional and almost grand parts here are nice. The vocalist have got a really nice and strong voice and his way of singing in a melodic way is nice for a listen. The melodic arrangements in the vocals are good and keeps this album above the surface. Especially the first song has got a good melodic vocalchorus, and also several of the other songs are good because of the vocals. I have listened to this album a few times focusing on the vocals and then on the music, and if the vocals hadn't been that strong this album would have been forgotten pretty soon, but due to the fact that the melodies remain in the head, this is a nice album. Metal with melodic Folk parts. 40:15

WELTER
"The Elder Land"
BERZERKER RECORDS

Dull and empty old styleish Black Metal/Metal done by one guy. This is priced as a mini-CD but it really makes no difference, this reeks of uninteresting music and old news. I am sure his friends would be interested in listening to this CD, but for all the others this must sound like nonsense. 45:38

WITHERING SURFACE
"The Nude Ballet"
EUPHONIOUS RECORDS

I have never liked this band, and this album certainly doesn't change that. It comes as no surprise that they have a very produced sound, very polished and very kind. Very cute melodies, like their neighbours Dark Tranquillity and it bothers me that their label already have voted this as the Danish Metal album of the year. Sure, this is better than some Power Metal cliché but seriously speaking I am feeling sick. So cute and nice, where's the Metal attitude? It takes no effort listening to this, it has no profound qualities, only music on the surface. Links could be drawned to the light Swedish "Death" Metal sound, and if I say something more I will get angry. Denmark, come on! 41:57

WITCHERY
"Restless & Dead"
NECROPOLIS RECORDS

The most overrated album of last year I would firmly say, though not all that bad. However, I am seriously doubtful when they proudly announce that they will release 4 albums during one year. I wonder where the quality control is within this band, because this album is packed with dead and boring moments in every song. But if the pride they have as musicians lies on the fact that some of them come from The Haunted and Mercyful Fate, I guess it is easy to assume that they will sell many records regardless of the many dull moments in their music. Because this album is as far from being a classic as Cradle of Filth is a Black Metal band and regardless of the many good reviews this album has received, I simply can't understand what's so excellent about it. In my ears this is just an average Metal album with thrashy parts and a little above average riffs.35:46

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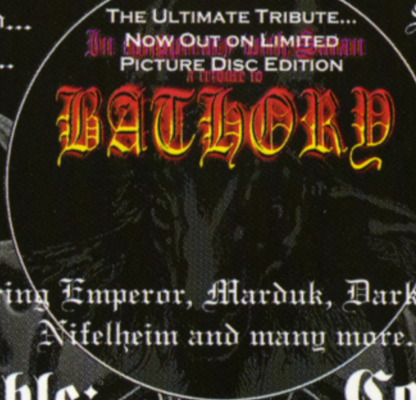

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